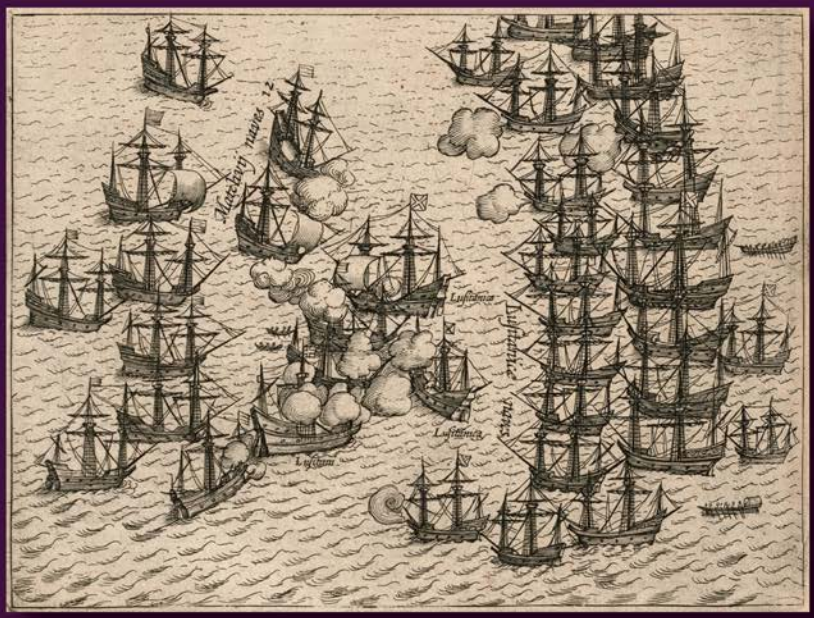

Empires of the Sea

Maritime Power Networks in World History

Edited by
Rolf Strootman, Floris van den Eijnde and Roy van Wijk

BRILL

Empires of the Sea

Cultural Interactions in the Mediterranean

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Maritime Empires in World History

Rolf Strootman

Among the numerous empires in world history, several were of a maritime nature—the Classical Athenian Empire, the Venetian Empire, the premodern Portuguese Empire, and the modern Japanese Empire, to name but a few well-known examples from disparate periods and regions. Relying on naval power rather than land armies, and availing themselves of (pre-existing) trade networks, maritime empires often were less centralized and state-like than land-based empires.[1]

The volume *Empires of the Sea* seeks to rethink preindustrial maritime empires by understanding them as dynamic, multilayered networks connecting several interest groups and brokers located on these networks' coastal and insular nodes, *viz*. in port cities, emporia or naval bases. Particularly in Mediterranean studies, network approaches have opened up new research avenues for the study of transregional economic exchange, cultural interactions, and religious change; these approaches are now themselves in need of new objectives and directions. One of our aims is to foreground the element of power politics and coercion to the existing focus on culture and economy. The emphasis that current empire studies place on cultural and political diversity as a principal characteristic of empire has made one historical question increasingly urgent: how were these heterogeneous sociopolitical patchworks controlled and integrated over large distances and in the face of changing historical circumstances?

Past empire studies often departed from the model of the modern colonial empire linked to the European nation state. The last decades however have seen the publication of a number of volumes dealing with a much wider variety of empires, often in a comparative perspective in order to recognize common characteristics and trends.[2] This interest springs from the relatively

1 The connection between trade networks and naval imperialism is explored by Abulafia 2014.

2 The pioneering study by Eisenstadt 1963 is still impressive because of its wide scope, but outdated because of its modernist, Weberian insistence on "bureaucracy" as a major element in the typology. Sinopoli 1994 is a review article and a fundamental text for the current world historical, comparative approach to empires (and because of its clarity, also a great text to discuss with undergraduates). See further e.g. Alcock *et al.* 2001; Motyl 2001; Hurlet 2008;

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recent realization that, empires, together with city states, were the most common forms of political organization, and that most empires in world history were not European.[3] These comparative empire studies have focused either on land empires or bundled together various types of empire. By contrast, this volume will examine one specific form of imperial domination, and one that has hitherto received little attention.[4]

Our interest in the phenomenon obviously is based on the conviction that it makes sense to create analytical typologies of groups of empires unified by specific "system-forming features".[5] A list of (overlapping) categories can be easily compiled. It could include centralized, city-based empires (e.g. the Babylonian, Songhay, and Aztec empires); pastoralist confederacies (the Xiongnu, Seljuk and Comanche empires); military land empires (the Achaemenid, Seleukid, and Sasanian empires in Antiquity; the Timurid, Mughal and Qing empires of early modern Eurasia), entrepreneurial empires (the early Spanish Empire in the Americas, the Dutch and English seaborne empires in the Caribbean, the eastward expansion of early modern Russia, and the nineteenth-century American "West"), modern colonial empires, and so forth. However, the only type of preindustrial empire that has actually been recognized as distinct and studied for its specific traits and dynamics has so far been the "nomadic" or "pastoral" empire.[6] But to my knowledge not even nomadic empires have been studied comparatively, nor have they yet been brought together in an edited volume dedicated specifically to this type of imperial polity.[7] Like nomadic empires, maritime empires are prime candidates to be grouped as a comprehensive category. They too have never been studied from a comparative perspective.

Münkler 2005/2008; Morris and Scheidel 2009; Burbank and Cooper 2010; Bang and Bayly 2011a; and most recently Gehler and Rollinger 2014.

3 For empire as the dominant form of political organization in Afro-Eurasia before 1500, see Darwin 2007.

4 For matters of definition, see the next section.

5 Areshian 2013, 5.

6 I use these terms of course for convenience: pastoralist cultures are never entirely nomadic, and empires created by so-called nomads usually adopt the features of a sedentary polity with remarkable speed, co-opting non-nomads as administrators or ambassadors. These empires nevertheless do seem to constitute a distinct type of imperial polity with specific shared traits such as the pivotal role of (multi-ethnic) "warbands" created around a charismatic leader. For the particularities of "nomadic" empires see Forbes Manz 1989; Barfield 1989 and 2001; Allsen 2001; Di Cosmo 2004; Hämäläinen 2008; Wink 2011; Hope 2016.

7 But this may be expected to come from the ERC-funded research project *Nomadic Empires: A World Historical Perspective*, under the direction of Pekka Hämäläinen (nomadicempires.history.ox.ac.uk).

The present volume developed from a one-day conference at the University of Utrecht on premodern maritime empires, 16 January 2015, convened by Floris van den Eijnde, Roy van Wijk, and myself.[8] For this conference we tentatively defined "maritime empires" as systems of political and/or economic control that employ naval (trade) routes as their main arteries of connectivity and communication. Maritime empires aim primarily at controlling ports, coastal regions and islands rather than large land masses. For warfare, and coercion in general, they rely on naval power more than on armies. They should ideally emphasize sea power in their representation and do not necessarily have to be centralized states. This means that in order to be a meaningful heuristic concept, 'maritime empire' should signify more than just an empire whose territories are so dispersed that they are dependant on maritime lines of communications. The Spanish Empire in the Americas, for instance, to our mind qualifies less as a maritime empire than the VOC empire in the East Indies, or the chain of fortresses and emporia created by Medieval Genoa in the eastern Mediterranean.

Who created naval empires and why? In what ways are imperial networks based on sea routes different from inland empires based primarily on roads? What institutions did these empires develop to secure continued control over sea routes? What interactions took place between "global" sea empires and local populations? Who acted as brokers? What happened when two or more imperial projects competed simultaneously in the same region, as they did for instance in the ancient Aegean, the late medieval Mediterranean or the early modern Indian Ocean? How did political and economic aims coincide or interact? Were sea empires more trade-driven than land empires? How resilient were sea empires? Were they able to change their networks of power in reaction to changing geopolitical circumstance and internal threats? More questions could easily be added to this list, and the present volume will answer only a number of them.

Recurrent themes in the contributions are *overlap*, *polycentrism*, *brokerage* and *entrepreneurship*, as we will see in the last section of this introduction. But before having a closer look at maritime empires as a distinct type of empire, and the traits they share as suggested by the contributions to this volume, we will first briefly review some recent trends in the study of premodern empires.

8 We are grateful to Utrecht University's strategic program "Institutions for Open Societies" for its financial support of this conference. Thanks also to Amber Brüsewitz for her invaluable help in organizing this conference.

Looking at Diversity and Change: the Imperial Turn

Empires are extensive, composite polities, often created through conquest and characterized by internal political and cultural diversity.[9] As Thomas Barfield put it, empires are "organized both to administer and exploit diversity".[10] To deal with diversity, imperial rulers often employ universalistic ideologies.[11] Compared to the European-style nation states of the modern age, empires seem delicate political systems under constant pressure from centrifugal forces and in danger of becoming overextended. Yet seen from the long-term perspective of world history, empires, together with city-states, arguably belong to the most effective and most common forms of political organization. Empires, moreover, were instrumental in the emergence of early forms of globalization, connecting disparate societies over vast geographical distances and facilitating economic and cultural exchanges between them. Empires encourage or enforce migration (soldiers, colonists, slaves) and produce "cosmopolitan" identities and languages (e.g. Aramaic, Greek, Persian, Han Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian or English).[12] This new awareness of the predominance and importance of "empire" in world history is sometimes called the "Imperial Turn".[13]

Recent studies of premodern empires emphasize that rather than administrative unity, political and cultural *diversity* is the essence of empire. Rather than approaching empires with a "unitary" theory of statehood, Bang and Bayly follow Michael Mann in understanding empires as open-ended systems, "constituted of multiple overlapping and intersecting sociospatial networks of power".[14] By directly or indirectly adopting Mann's network perspective, scholars increasingly see premodern empires as negotiated enterprises based on

9 See the references in n. 1.

10 Barfield 2001, 29.

11 Liverani 1979; Pagden 1995; Bang 2011; Bang and Kołodziejczyk 2012; Strootman 2014b; Lavan, Payne and Weisweiler 2016. The centrality of ideology can be considered a characteristic of empires: Alcock and Morrison 2001.

12 See Fusaro 2010, esp. 275–278.

13 Not to be confused with the so-called "New Imperial History", which is mainly concerned with re-evaluating the historical significance of the British Empire; see e.g. Ferguson 2003; Black 2004a. The renewed interest in empires is also clear from the feeling that empire somehow is "back" in the form of supranational polities superseding the nation state (see e.g. Hardt and Negri 2000; Maier 2006; Colomer 2007; Zielonka 2007; and Marks 2012), and from the success of recent popularizing treatments, often presenting imperialism in a positive light (e.g. Ferguson 2003; Turchin 2006; and Chua 2009).

14 Bang and Bayly 2011b, 4; cf. Mann 1986, 1.

both coercion and reciprocal exchanges.[15] For despite the fact that empires can be extremely violent when they encounter resistance or rivals, imperial lords generally prefer to access resources by co-opting local rulers and elites. This often leads to shifts in local power balances or even the establishment of new elite groups. This means that empires are *entangled systems*—a term borrowed from Tilly, that has been used by this author to explain the interdependence of cities and empires in the Hellenistic world.[16]

Students of empire must therefore develop a keen eye for the agency of indigenous elites and other local interest groups, and also for the "between-culture traveler", the bilingual individual or group, such as traders and soldiers, acting as broker between disparate societies.[17] This means that some indigenous elites participated in imperial projects, benefiting from the rudimentary forms of globalization created, or enhanced, by big empires. Other elites did not benefit or were superseded by groups protected by the imperial dynasty. These disempowered elites often became enemies of the empire.[18]

Ancient historians in particular tend to distinguish between "empire" and "hegemony". The distinction is misleading. It derives from the application of modern concepts of imperialism and colonization to premodern and early modern empires. But the colonial empires created by modern European states provide a poor model for understanding the role of empires in world history. Comparative empire studies suggest that Eurasian empires before 1800 were always largely or partly hegemonic. Indeed, already in 1941, Rostovtzeff stated that imperialism is not only the pursuit of territorial expansion; it is also the search for political hegemony and the wish to play a leading role in the political life of the civilised world.[19] Willem Vogelsang suggested that Achaemenid rule in Central Asia was best described by the word "hegemony", which he defined as "recognition by local rulers of the overlordship of the [...] sovereign, with personal ties established by marriage or other connections, cemented by gifts."[20] This describes only one form of hegemony or "sphere of influence"

15 Bayly 1988; Hintze 1997; Ma 2000; Barkey 2008; Ballantyne 2012; Faruqui 2012; Noreña 2012; Glatz 2013; Strootman 2013 and 2014a; Waerzeggers 2014.

16 Strootman 2007; 2019; cf. Tilly 1994.

17 De Swaan 2001; Bochner, Furnham and Ward 2001; Rothman 2010.

18 Superseded elites could react to their exclusion by developing a pronounced indigenous culture in opposition to their more successful peers, as e.g. the Maccabees did in second-century BCE Judea—a form of "glocalization" that can be understood, too, from the dynamics of imperial interactions (Strootman 2006).

19 Rostovtzeff 1941, I.

20 Vogelsang 1992, 304–305.

that premodern empires have employed: "indirect" rule through vassal rulers.[21] The protection of dependent but autonomous cities was another form of hegemonic rule,[22] as was the establishment of tributary satellite states in frontier regions, but the repertoire is much larger. Another way to describe the political diversity within empires is by speaking of empires as *composite entities*, combining a variety of methods to access resources.[23] Robert Kallet-Marx adds a temporal dimension by arguing that the integration of the Greek world into the Roman Empire was not the sudden imposition of Roman "rule" but a fluid, complex process of mutual adaptations and negotiations; but he still insists on a distinction between "hegemony" and "empire".[24]

Thus, premodern, especially central Eurasian empires have been reconceptualized as (1) fluid networks of personal relations, (2) negotiated (or "transactional"), entangled systems, and (3) composite entities. This allows us to get beyond the traditional center-periphery template based on the model of the sovereign nation state.[25] For preindustrial empires, the control of people and resources usually was more important than the control of territory per se. Karen Barkey described the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a "hub-and-spoke structure" of relations between the dynasty and localized elites, pointing out that "the basic configuration of relationships between the imperial center and local sub-centers was constructed in a different fashion for each relationship, resulting in a patchwork pattern of relations with structural holes between peripheries."[26] These relations were subject to constant change. As Terence D'Altroy wrote, "[t]he outstanding feature of preindustrial empires was the continually metamorphosing nature of relations between the central powers and the societies drawn under the imperial aegis."[27]

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21 Best known perhaps in the form of the so-called "client kings" of Late Republican and Early Imperial Rome, see for this phenomenon Hekster 2010, and for its Hellenistic background Strootman 2010.

22 Strootman 2011.

23 Goffman and Stroop 2004.

24 Kallet-Marx 1995.

25 Wallerstein's center-periphery model is on the wane more generally; for a fundamental critique of its use to understand cultural interactions in the Sumerian-period Near East, see Stein 1998. Criticism of the nation state model and history writing has been pithily expressed e.g. by Subrahmanyam 1997; Smith 2005.

26 Barkey 2008, 1 and *passim*; cf. Motyl 2001, defining empires as "hierarchically organized systems with a hub-like structure—a rimless wheel—within which a core elite and state dominate peripheral elites and societies by serving as intermediaries for their significant interaction and by channeling resource flows" (p. 27).

27 D'Altroy 2001, 125.

The Imperial Turn has thus dismantled the politicized view that tended to associate even ancient imperialism with European colonialism,[28] and thought of indigenous agency primarily in polarized terms as active and passive resistance to exploitation by a "foreign" power.[29] This is of course not to say that imperialism was never a form of exploitation; violence is at the core of virtually every empire in history; as Raben shows in his contribution, this can even be said of the allegedly mercantile sea empire of the Dutch VOC in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Prasenjit Duara rather bluntly, but rightly, put it with regard to the various *different* empires emerging in what is *now* the Republic of China: the task of the world historian, is to "rescue history from the nation".[30] The Imperial Turn replaced the understanding of empire as an evolutionary dead-end with an awareness that empires dominated world history until the late eighteenth century, and that most empires in world history were not European but Mediterranean and Asian.[31] The resulting dissociation of premodern, and early modern non-Western, empires from the bordered nation state also enabled a better understanding of the universalistic ideology that characterizes most empires, as well as their ambiguous "borders", which often were ill-defined, permeable and constantly shifting (or even entirely non-existent).[32]

Maritime Networks: the Mediterranean Paradigm

As we have seen, a major advance made by recent empire studies, is the realization that empires can be understood as networks of exchange, operated by particular interest groups and individuals. As network polities, empires are no longer the stagnant stone colossi of the older literature and popular imagination. Instead they are more often seen as complex webs of interaction, subject to ever-changing internal and external power relations.[33] Rather than being based on institutions, empires rely on chains of intermediaries, brokers and

28 See Strootman in this volume.

29 Pitts 2010; in defense of this view, see Dirks 2007.

30 Duara 1997.

31 See Darwin 2007; Mikhail & Philliou 2012.

32 Strootman 2007; Bang & Kołodziejczyk 2012; Lavan, Payne, Weisweiler 2016; cf. n. 11, above.

33 For the significance of interimperial exchanges—competition, conflict, diplomacy—between empires for their respective developments, see e.g. Lieven 2000; Faroqhi 2004; Barkey and Batzell 2011.

translators that link the central power to its local agents and allies. Internally, empires are as much based on negotiation and local conflicts as on top-down coercion. Empires accordingly can in some cases be shown to have been multipolar. Thus, awareness of the dynamic nature of personalized networks, to repeat an earlier observation, offers historians an alternative for presumed hierarchies of centers and peripheries. How does this pertain to maritime empires specifically?

Connectivity has been a central theme in Mediterranean history since Fernand Braudel insisted seventy years ago that the Middle Sea was a relative unity in its ecology, economy and culture.[34] In opposition to Braudel, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell half a century later argued that ecological diversity, cultural fragmentation and social uncertainty were the essential features of the preindustrial Mediterranean.[35] The once popular concept of "Mediterraneanism"—the idea that Mediterranean societies because of their maritime connectivity share important cultural traits ("I also have a moustache", as Horden and Purcell ironically summarized the to their mind superficial concept), particularly that they are all rooted in a similar moral system of honor and shame—have since become the subject of fierce, and still ongoing debate.[36] Related to these debates is the current emphasis on economic regionalism and cultural "localism".[37] Today, the Mediterranean is often seen as a patchwork of interconnected "small worlds" such as the Adriatic, Aegean or Levant—a point taken up by Kelder in the first contribution to this volume.[38]

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34 Braudel 1949.

35 Horden and Purcell 2000a.

36 The foundational text is Campbell 1964, a study of the moral values of the North Greek mountain community of Sarakatsani, soon followed by the epoch-making volume Peristiany 1966, which included contributions by *i.a.* Pierre Bourdieu, Julian Pitt-Rivers, and J. K. Campbell himself; the volume compared disparate societies in e.g. Kabylia, Cyprus, Greece and Andalusia to underpin the notion of the Mediterranean's exceptional high degree of interconnectivity. Horden and Purcell 2000 as we saw turned against this notion. The essays collected in Harris 2005 again respond to Horden and Purcell's views. Also see Morris 2005, claiming in support of the Braudelian view that the Mediterranean is a geographical unit after all. Lichtenberger and von Rüden 2015 gather new approaches to Mediterranean studies, including the important view that Mediterranean seas can be meaningful "seascapes", instead of mere passageways between landscapes (C. von Rüden); see in the latter context also Beaulieu 2016, on perceptions of the sea in ancient Greek culture.

37 See Reger 2011 and 2013, cf. e.g. Dougherty and Kurke 2010; Whitmarsh 2010; Blake 2014. Recently, Bonnier 2016 has shown that in Classical Antiquity allegedly 'remote' areas around the Corinthian Gulf in fact were better integrated than previously assumed, despite the mountainous nature of this region.

38 Cf. below, n. 49.

Recently, Cyprian Broodbank has successfully brought together different perspectives by studying the "pre-Classical" Mediterranean in both its diversity *and* unity.[39] The dynamic, "multicultural" complexity of the early modern Mediterranean meanwhile has been compellingly charted in the work of Molly Greene.[40]

Be all this as it may, it is clear that the ancient Mediterranean, one way or another, was covered by a dense web of sea and land routes that encouraged the exertion of naval power and the development of maritime empires (although this notion has its critics, too).[41] This high degree of connectivity persisted through the medieval and early modern periods, despite the popular notion that a breech was introduced by the Islamic conquests of Late Antiquity.[42] The empires of the Athenians, Ptolemies, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Genoese, Venetians, Catalans, Umayyads, Abbasids and Ottomans were all based to a significant degree on naval networks and sea power.[43] It probably was the Mediterranean's character as an assemblage of comprehensive sub-regions that made political control of sea routes possible from an early stage on.

Network theories from modern sociology have been widely applied to ancient Mediterranean societies and economies.[44] For Irad Malkin, a network approach was a crucial tool in understanding the development of supra-local identities in the Archaic period.[45] Most of all, maritime networks have been

39 Broodbank 2013.

40 Greene 2001 and 2011.

41 See e.g. Starr 1989, who argues that in Antiquity the exercise of "sea power" was restricted by lack of resources and the limited seakeeping qualities of galleys (p. 5–6). For an overview of successive "thalassocracies" in the Mediterranean, see Abulafia 2014. On sailing routes also see Arnaud 2011, emphasizing the constantly changing nature of ancient sailing patterns.

42 See e.g. Goldberg 2012a on the medieval Geniza, Jewish merchants based in Egypt who operated a Mediterranean-wide trade network and acted as brokers between Muslims and Christians; on Christian-Muslim-Jewish (economic) interactions in the Medieval Mediterranean see further Goldberg 2012b; Michienzi 2013; Fromherz 2016.

43 On the concept of "sea power", see below. For the Mediterranean as the *mare nostrum* of medieval Islamic empires see now Picard 2018. The empires of the Athenians, Ptolemies and Genoese are discussed in this volume by respectively Van den Eijnde, Strootman and Kirk.

44 Landmark publications include Collar 2007; Constantakopoulou 2007; Malkin, Constantakopoulou and Panagopoulou 2009; Malkin 2011; Manning 2011. In Ancient history, network analysis has been specifically applied to the study of religious developments; for the state of the debate see Woolf 2016.

45 Malkin 2005; 2011.

studied by archaeologists who examine cultural (ex)change by looking at material culture.[46] As is to be expected, network approaches to the ancient Mediterranean have of late become the subject of criticism and even suspicion. This is due to the realization that the evidence before the modern age may not always be sufficient to reach the required level of sophistication, and also because the result sometimes is more descriptive than analytical (in addition, perhaps, to sheer overexposure to elaborate, computer-generated graphs at conferences). The study of maritime networks however seems to have gained new momentum through a recent focus on port cities: superconnected hubs of land *and* sea routes that not only serve processes of connectivity and (proto) globalization, but are often also perceived by contemporaries as having this function. Civic identity in port cities like Rotterdam, Shanghai, Singapore, Marseilles or Izmir often is defined in maritime and/or international terms.[47] Moreover, port cities in history can frequently be associated with empires.[48] In this volume, the port cities approach is represented by the contribution of Cátia Antunes. A network approach to empires can be useful in understanding these still badly understood entities even without the availability of "big data" because research can focus on the dynamics of the relationships between the social actors who constitute the empire. Such an approach does not require the high level of sophistication aimed at by the social network analysis of contemporary societies.

Networks are *complex* systems. Ties between nodes (individuals, communities, polities) can be either "strong" or "weak" depending on the measure of complexity of relations that connect them (called "degree" in Social Network Analysis), and both have advantages and disadvantages.[49] Several nodes can link up to become strongly interwoven "clusters"; this can lead to powerful collective action but also to stagnation or the closing of the system for outside influences.[50] Networks moreover are *dynamic* systems. The direction and nature of networks that empires try to create or control will usually shift over

46 See e.g. Robinson and Wilson 2011; Alberti and Sabatine 2013; Knappett 2013; Fenn and Römer-Strehl 2013; Blake 2014. Cf. Collar *et al.* 2015. For the actual sailing routes, see Arnaud 2005 and 2011; Beresford 2013.

47 Recent popularizing publications on Dutch maritime identity suggest a growing interest in this subject, at least in the Low Countries by the Sea (cf. e.g. De Meer and Schokkenbroek 2013; Linmans, Rommelse, Van der Zee 2016).

48 See for instance on port cities and their significance for the functioning of the Roman Empire Schörle 2011; Rice, Wilson and Schörle 2012; Arnaud 2014. I was not able to consult the recent volume Höghammar, Alroth and Lindhagen 2016.

49 The fundamental text is Granovetter 1973; cf. Strogatz and Watts 1998; Kadushin 2012.

50 On these well-connected "small world" networks, see Strogatz and Watts 1998; Watts 1999.

time. Initially successful ties can become unsuccessful within two or three generations, for instance when a dependent "conquest group" turns into a privileged power elite that intercedes at court for the sake of its own interests and clientele.[51] Unsuccessful connections may however be abandoned by a dynasty by developing ties with other interest groups, thus creating new alliances.[52] It seems that the ability or inability of imperial dynasties to do so can cause either their endurance or downfall. As Karen Barkey and others have shown, the relative success of the Ottoman Empire—the longest existing empire under a single dynasty in world history—may well be the result of the dynasty's ability to shift networks, recruit new agents and find new powerful allies among its ethnically diverse populations.[53] In the case of maritime political systems, ecological changes or changes on a macroeconomic level can also render ties obsolete. Harbors may silt up. Natural resources may become exhausted. Trade routes in the hinterland of port cities may be relocated due to shifting power relations or climate change, passing by once-prosperours ports.

The rise of a network approach to empire moreover has led to the awareness that in history often several imperial networks can share the same geopolitical space. This notion of imperial overlap stems from the study of so-called nomad empires. Pekka Hämäläinen's examination of the concurrent control of central Texas and northern Mexico by both the Comanche tribal federation and the Spanish Empire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries offers the most compelling analysis of this phenomenon.[54] The idea of criss-crossing imperial networks and overlapping hegemonic spheres seems to be particularly well-suited for understanding maritime power structures, too.[55] Examples of overlapping empires are the Antigonid, Seleukid and Ptolemaic empires in the Hellenistic Aegean; the Ottoman and Venetian empires in the eastern Mediterranean; and the Spanish, British and Dutch empires in the early modern Caribbean.

In the next section we will have a closer look at maritime empires as a type of imperial polity, and their principal defining features.

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51 Duindam 1995, 79; for the theory of power structures and the role of brokers and agents, see Elder-Vass 2010.

52 Barkey 2008, *passim*; also see Heebøll-Holm in this volume, describing a successful attempt by the old elite to resist this mechanism.

53 *Ibidem*.

54 Hämäläinen 2008.

55 Cf. Raben, this volume: "maritime empires have the fascinating quirk that they allow other, sometimes competing networks to operate within its sphere of influence."

Maritime Empires, Sea Power, and Naval Warfare

At the beginning of this chapter, maritime empires were tentatively defined as systems of political and/or economic control that employ sailing routes as their main form of connectivity. They aim at controlling ports, coastal regions and islands rather than at conquering large land masses, and for warfare and coercion they rely more on naval power than on armies. It seems that like land empires, seaborne empires can often be associated with particular, geographically bounded regions characterized by extensive coastlines, and an abundance of (natural) harbors and/or islands. This includes e.g. the Aegean (the Athenian Empire), the Adriatic Sea (the Venetian Empire), the Caribbean (the early Spanish Empire), the Baltic Sea (the Danish and Swedish empires), and the Java Sea (the Dutch East Indies Company). An additional characteristic could be an empire's self-identification in words or symbols, especially at its center, as crucial for its success on the sea. This is something we see in for instance Ptolemaic Alexandria or seventeenth-century Amsterdam. In the fifth century BCE, the Athenians made their sea power, or "thalassocracy" (θαλασσοκρατία, *thalassokratia*), part of their collective identity, and saw their control of the Delian League as a prerequisite for democracy.[56] In the United Kingdom, "Rule Britannia!" is still the exuberant highpoint of the Last Night of the Proms.[57]

Which imperial polities qualify as "maritime"? Can, for instance, the peer polity network of Mycenean palaces in the Bronze Age Aegean be considered "imperial"?[58] And what about the "Pirates of the Caribbean" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? The entanglements of freebooting buccaneers and the European seaborne empires are well-recognized.[59] But can "pirate"

56 Engels 2016, and cf. Wilker 2016; also see further Kopp 2016, who takes a more skeptical approach to a possible Athenian concept of "thalassocracy" (2016 apparently was a good year for the semantics of Classical θαλασσοκρατία). Rüdiger 2012 discusses *thalassokratia* in the context of the revival of empire by the Frankish monarchy but concludes that a concept "maritime power" does not exist in medieval European texts. The bottom-line is, that in ancient and medieval writings, *thalassokratia* was no technical term and in its English rendering can be applied freely to maritime empires and other polities who control the sea.

57 For an analysis of the song's proto-imperial, naval overtones, see Armitage 2000, 173.

58 On this question see Kelder in this volume; cf. *id.* 2010 and 2012; on Mycenean maritime networks in the Aegean, see Tataron 2013.

59 See e.g. the contributions in Colás and Mabee 2011, examining the role of private entrepreneurs in the establishment of empire; and Hanna 2015, emphasizing pirates' roles in establishing trade links with the American hinterlands for the emerging British Empire; cf. from a broader perspective Thomson 1994. The entanglement of piracy and imperialism in the early colonial world, and pirates' involvement in trade and interimperial

networks themselves be understood as organizations of the imperial type (considering the supralocal and transcultural nature of these networks which seem to have been geared towards organizing both trade and collective violence on an international scale)?[60] Are late seventeenth-century pirate fleets, temporarily assembled to raid the Spanish Main, essentially different from early nineteenth-century Comanche war parties raiding the Mexican interior (and who are now widely seen as having created an empire of the "nomadic" type)?[61] Among the topics discussed in this volume, the Mycenean traders-*cum*-raiders and Caribbean buccaneers constitute one end of a continuum that on its opposite side has more clear-cut examples of (dynastic) imperial polities, for instance the Ptolemaic and Portuguese empires. In between, we introduce some more unusual suspects, such as the fourth-century Boiotians, the multipolar island system in the northern seas during the Viking Age, and the powerful sultanate of Melaka that dominated the Malaysian straits in the sixteenth-century. What all these empires have in common, is that in accordance with our working definition they had strong coercive means at their disposal, and even may be said to have *specialized* in exercising organized violence. The capability and readiness to wage war is anyway a sine qua non of "empire".

Many historical empires had war fleets, exercised sea power and fought naval wars. Not all of them can be seen as *maritime* empires. The international supremacy of the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries obviously was based on superior naval fire power. But the empire itself was at the same time very much land-based. The Ottoman Empire in its Classical Age by contrast may have been *more* of a maritime empire than is usually assumed—and not just in the Mediterranean, but in the Indian Ocean as well.[62] Hellenistic Rhodes on the other hand, provides an example of a state (a *polis*) with overriding sea power but without an empire.[63]

The concept of "sea power" was formulated by American navy captain Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914), who in his later career was a lecturer in naval history at the United States Naval War College. In his influential book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, published in 1890, Mahan analyzed

warfare, has parallels in the ancient and early modern Mediterranean, see e.g. De Souza 1999; Schulz 2000; Gabrielsen 2003; Greene 2011; Schwara 2011.

60 See Lane in this volume.

61 Above, n. 54.

62 Brummett 1993 and 2007; Casale 2010.

63 Gabrielsen 1997; Wiemer 2002.

the importance of naval power in the rise of the British Empire to global dominance. What concerned him most, however, was contemporary American access to international markets across the "great highway" of the high seas. Securing such access, Mahan argued, would require not only a bigger merchant fleet, but also, following British example, a strong navy and a worldwide network of naval bases to support and protect it.[64] His emphasis on naval superiority, as Chester Starr noted, "fitted magnificently into the bellicose, imperialist outburst of the late nineteenth century in the United States, Great Britain and Germany" (and also France and Japan, we may add).[65]

Sea power has since become a separate object of study for both historians and policy makers.[66] The idea of a singular, superior "Western way of war" in land warfare as an explanation for the "rise of the West" in the (early) modern period has been utterly demolished in recent scholarship;[67] however, the astounding intra-European contest in enlarging the fire power of war ships that began with the Anglo-Dutch wars of the seventeenth century still merits further research in the context of Western Europe's temporary global dominance between ca. 1850 and 1950.

Definitions matter. It used to be controversial to suggest that the city of Carthage controlled a maritime empire from the fifth to the third century BCE.[68] The use of rigorous definitions that demand of "empire" intentionality, centralization and direct, state-like governance was part of the problem. Such definitions are often based partly on *modern* European imperialism—most of all that of the British Empire—and partly on an idealized view of the Roman Empire as very centralized and homogeneous (an image first created by Victorian historians who believed that the Roman Empire resembled the British). Carthage, it was often argued, cannot have been an empire because its creation of a web of interconnected coastal entrepots and strongholds in

64 "Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*: Securing international markets in the 1890s." In *Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations*, Office of the Historian, United States Department of State (no date). At history.state.gov/milestones/1866–1898/Mahan, visited February 4, 2018.

65 Starr 1989, 3–4.

66 On Mahan's influence, see Shulman 1991. See also the contributions to Baltrusch, Koppel and Wendt 2016, exploring sea power in the ancient Mediterranean, as did earlier Starr 1989.

67 See generally Lynn 2003, 1–27; Black 2004b, 66–103; Porter 2009, 23–54. Also see Börekçi 2006 and Ágoston 2014 on the Ottomans early participation in the alleged Western "military revolution" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

68 See the discussion of earlier literature in Whittaker 1978.

the western Mediterranean was motivated by trade considerations, as were the reciprocal agreements made with local communities; and at least until after the First Punic War (264–241 BCE), Carthage never attempted to create substantial imperial provinces of the type later introduced by the Romans. Yet ancient sources frequently describe Carthaginian overseas activities in terms of empire-building. For instance, the Roman historian Justin wrote that the sixth-century Carthaginian leader, Mago, laid the foundations of an *Imperium Poenorum* in Sicily and Sardinia, and the Greek historian Diodoros described the Carthaginian presence in his native Sicily as the "*hegemonia* of the Phoenicians";[69] the Battle of Himera in 480 BCE according to Herodotos was fought because the Carthaginians wanted to "enslave" the Sicilian Greeks by supporting the rule of tyrants in their cities (and of course because Herodotos wanted to suggest a link with the Battle of Salamis, which allegedly was fought on the very same day).[70] Greek authors described Carthaginian activities in Sicily not in economic terms but used the words *hegemonia*, *archē*, and *epikrateia*,[71] terms commonly used to denote hegemonic control of one polity or society over another.[72] C. R. Whittaker tried to solve this paradox by concluding that until the early fourth century BCE mutual agreements of reciprocity between Carthaginians and others, particularly in Sicily, gradually became unequal domination for political as well as commercial reasons.[73] The nature of Carthaginian imperialism changed after the First Punic War, when attempts were made to control territory in North Africa and Spain more directly.

The example of Carthage shows that it is not helpful to persist in using strict definitions, especially when these are obviously anachronistic or otherwise culturally inappropriate for the object of study. If a definition of "empire", or here more specifically "maritime empire", should identify some degree of "universal" commonalities, then this should be based on historical characteristics and notions. In the case of Carthage, we see that a clear distinction between economic and political motivations cannot be made, that the empire was hegemonic, and that before 241 BCE hegemony was exercised, not through territorial conquest, but by maintaining an armed control

69 Just. 19.1.1 and 18.7.19; Diod. 4.23.3, 10.18.6, and 12.26.3.

70 Hdt. 7.158 and 166.

71 Whittaker 1978, 61–62.

72 Desideri 2013; Erskine 2013.

73 Whittaker 1978, 88–89; see now also the contributions in Quinn and Vella 2014, examining the "Punic Mediterranean" as a more or less coherent system of cultural, political and economic connectivity. On Carthaginian "sea power", see Rawlings 2010.

of maritime networks and establishing alliance with autonomous coastal communities. If we exclude the multifarious historical forms of "hegemony" and "indirect rule" from our definition, many well-known premodern empires may no longer qualify as such, including land empires such as the Persian or Mongol empires.[74]

A relative high importance of economic considerations, intermingling with political and military ones, may be a specific characteristic of maritime empires. We see it perhaps in the Ptolemaic Empire of the third century BCE,[75] and certainly in the later Venetian Empire and the heavily militarized "merchant empire" of the Dutch East Indies Company in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[76] Also a multipolar organization of power—though found in land empires as well (the Mongol Empire is a good example)—may be common to sea empires.

Overlapping Empires in Early Modern South Asia

In the previous section, the idea of overlapping empires was introduced—a notion that followed from the conceptualization of (maritime) empires as networks. Network lines can cross or be shared. One good testing ground is provided by the early modern Indian Ocean. Here the Dutch, Portuguese, and British vied for control of the same sailing routes. These European trade networks however were in fact often built upon pre-existing networks and did not replace local traders. As Jane Hooper writes, "[w]hen Portuguese, Dutch, English and French traders began frequenting the ports of Madagascar, they discovered populations already engaged in long-distance trade with groups throughout the Indian Ocean."[77]

This now more generally accepted view was first pointed out by the maritime historians Ashin Das Gupta and K. N. Chaudhuri. They both had begun their careers by studying the British East Indies Company, and were increasingly bothered by the relative absence of local actors in standard historical

74 Note that the support of friendly regimes in autonomous cities, be they tyrannical, oligarchic or democratic, is usually seen as a form of indirect rule if this is done by "accepted" imperial polities such as the Achaemenid or Seleukid empires.

75 Manning 2011; Strootman in this volume. Cf. Reed 2003, who shows that the principal items transported by maritime traders of Classical Athens were grain, timber, slaves, and provisions for military expeditions.

76 Knaap 2015.

77 Hooper 2011, 218; also see Singh in this volume.

narratives.[78] They subsequently began studying interactions in a more inclusive manner, pointing out the African, Arab, and Indian networks underlying British sea power.[79] The old image of a succession of hegemonic European powers controlling the early modern Indian Ocean—first the Portuguese, then the Dutch, and finally the British—is now no longer acceptable.[80]

But whether colonial empires in the early modern period created new sea routes or consolidated preexisting ones, these could always be used by others as well. These others may have been local actors but also freelance agents from the homeland operating independently from the empire. As Cátia Antunes shows in her contribution to this volume, agents of the Portuguese crown managed also their own, unofficial "shadow empire". European merchant vessels in South Asian waters of course not only came to bring expensive luxury goods back to Europe. They also participated in local trade, carrying cargo for non-European traders.[81] There often were multi-ethnic crews aboard these ships even in the seventeenth-century. The Dutch East Indies Company employed Germans, Scandinavians, Chinese, Javanese, and Indians.[82] Despite the establishment of naval bases and their strong firepower, European powers had to broker deals with local rulers and elites.[83] They had to contend simultaneously with each other *and* with local traders and powers—including even the Ottoman dynasty, whose activities as a major maritime power in the Persian Gulf and beyond have been the subject of important new research.[84]

All this is not to say that the Portuguese, Dutch and British empires in early modern South Asia were not empires;[85] they simply were not all-powerful, and they were not alone. Imperialism in this and other periods was a complex and often messy business.

78 Gupta 1967 and 1979; Chaudhuri 1965 and 1978.

79 Chaudhuri 1985 and 1990; Gupta 1994; Gupta and Pearson 1999. On the Werdegang of Gupta and Chaudhuri, see Mukherjee 2013; also see Margariti 2008.

80 If only for the fact that European trading companies until the mid-eighteenth century were not as powerful as conventional historical narratives by European historians have suggested; cf. Singh, this volume.

81 Fusaro *et al.* 2016.

82 Van Rossum 2014; also Knaap 2001; cf. Raben in this volume.

83 Hooper 2011, 217; cf. Subrahmanyam 1995.

84 See above, n. 62; a comparable situation existed in the Hellenistic Aegean, see Strootman in this volume.

85 Subrahmanyam 1993 and Raben, this volume; but see the criticism of Singh in this volume.

From the Black Ships of Mycenae to Buccaneers Going Dutch: Sea Empires in World History

The volume *Empires of the Seas* contains thirteen contributions, representing a wide range of regions and periods in preindustrial world history. Several of these are based on lectures at the Utrecht Conference, others were especially written for this volume. The overview we offer does not claim to be comprehensive. There are of course some obvious omissions. Several of the better known non-European maritime empires had to be excluded because they fall outside of the premodern focus of this volume. Among them the Omani system of hegemony along the coasts of East Africa: in existence since Omani forces drove the Portuguese from the coast between Lamu and Cape Delgado around 1700, a strong maritime power based on Zanzibar flourished most of all under the ruler Imam Seyyid Said (r. 1806–1856).[86] An interesting case study that is omitted, too, is the Japanese Empire between 1895 and 1945.[87]

The present volume is divided into three parts. Part 1 gathers together five papers on the Mediterranean. As was suggested in this introduction, the Middle Sea arguably was home to the largest number of maritime empires before the early modern period, perhaps precisely because its subdivision into smaller geographic compartments and relatively extensive coasts invited large scale political control from an early age on. Contributions to this part range from the Bronze Age (Kelder), via the Archaic and Classical Aegean (Van den Eijnde, van Wijk), to the early globalization processes of the Hellenistic period (Strootman), and the later Middle Ages (Kirk). Part 2 contains three papers focusing on Scandinavian maritime powers in the Northern Seas, from the Viking "Sea Kings" in the Middle Ages and the medieval Danish kingdom (Mostert, Heebøll-Holm) to the seventeenth-century Swedish Empire (Mörke). With Northern Seas we mean the North Atlantic, the Irish Sea, the North Sea, the Baltic, and the White Sea. Part 3 takes us fully into the early modern period, and here the perspective broadens to include the Indian Ocean, the Caribbean, and the seas of Southeast Asia. Though this is of course the period of the so-called European overseas expansion, the five contributions in this part take either a non-western—to use for convenience that rather Eurocentric term—perspective (Singh, Borschberg), or look at cross-cultural interactions in the context of early European colonialism (Antunes, Raben, Lane).

86 Bhacker 1994, 60–82.

87 For an overview, see Myers and Peattie 1984.

Opening the section on the ancient and medieval Mediterranean, Jorrit Kelder discusses the role of maritime networks in the rise of Mycenae in southern Greece to its status as leading city in the Aegean from the sixteenth to fourteenth century BCE. Kelder argues that it was Mycenae's ability to dominate the maritime "small world" of the Saronic Gulf that enabled the Mycenaeans to access, and finally control, the trans-Aegean trade routes linking Greece to Anatolia, and also to dominate the long-range sailing route to Egypt. Control of trade routes, in particular those to and from Egypt, enabled Mycenae to extend its political influence across the Aegean and into Anatolia, resulting in the formation of what may tentatively be called a Mycenaean "Great Kingdom".

In the next paper, Floris van den Eijnde investigates the origins of the Classical Athenian Empire. He shows that the Athenians were able to establish maritime hegemony in the Aegean with such relative speed and apparent ease after the Second Greek-Persian War (480–479 BCE) because they could avail themselves of preexisting networks centered on Athens. Van den Eijnde makes the important point of highlighting the crucial role of private entrepreneurs in exploring and establishing sea routes, drawing also attention to the dynamics of competition between the various aristocratic families involved in international trade during the Archaic period. Thus, when the Persians temporarily retreated from the Aegean after 479, Athens with its new fleet could successfully create its own maritime hegemony.

How strong Athenian power networks eventually would become is demonstrated by Roy van Wijk's contribution on the fourth-century BCE Theban attempts to break Athenian maritime hegemony. Van Wijk reconsiders the attempts of the Thebans to establish naval supremacy in the Aegean in the time of the so-called Theban Hegemony in mainland Greece (371–362 BCE). Theban naval ambitions of the 360s BCE against Athenian maritime dominance have often been regarded as a misguided folly that left no lasting imprint on history. Drawing attention to the outstanding geopolitical location of Boiotia, the region in which Thebes was located—with direct access to both the Aegean Sea and the Corinthian Gulf, and possessing some excellent harbors—van Wijk is able to show that Theban maritime aspirations were not unrealistic. What finally thwarted these ambitions, was a failure to obtain the (financial) support of the Persian Empire, which in the recent past had enabled the Spartans to temporarily overthrow Athenian maritime dominance.

The Ptolemaic Empire (ca. 323–30 BCE) arguably was the first naval superpower that expressed its dominance programmatically by a wide array of maritime imagery and symbolism. In his contribution, Rolf Strootman shows how the Ptolemaic Empire of the third century BCE was an extensive, universalistic network empire rather than a mere kingdom of Egypt. The Ptolemies

maintained a naval presence in regions as far removed as the Black Sea and the Red Sea. The focus, however, is on the Aegean as the main arena for interimperial conflict where the Ptolemies competed with their imperial rivals, the Antigonid and Seleukid dynasties, over the control of ports and sea routes. Like several other empires examined in this volume, the Ptolemaic Empire was to some degree an entrepreneurial enterprise, with powerful individual actors commissioned by the dynasty to establish new settlements.

The last paper in the Mediterranean section is Thomas Kirk's contribution on the Republic of Genoa and its empire during the later Middle Ages. Kirk critically evaluates the relative merits of conceptualizing the pre-modern Genoese polity as a (maritime or "commercial") empire. Discussing the role of both merchants and state actors in the creation of Genoese control of preexisting networks and patterns of trade, and the establishment of an assortment of colonial outposts, Kirk concludes that the results of these actors' endeavors were far from uniform. Genoa's coercive means were economic rather than military. The Genoese "Empire" was not a top-down structure, and commercial ties across the eastern Mediterranean often followed pre-existing social ties between families. Being a network system above all, the prominence of Genoa came to an end with the loss of its naval bases in Anatolia, the Aegean and the Black Sea to the Ottomans in the fifteenth century.

In the first of three contributions on the Northern Seas (Part 2), Marco Mostert, too, takes a critical approach to the possible conceptualization of the Viking maritime networks as (network) empires, as these were not always "systems of control" or based on conquest. He does observe however that the political and cultural diversity in the maritime networks of the Viking age was similar to that observed in pre-modern land empires. There were attempts at developing systems of political or naval dominance, employing trade routes and trying to control seaports, coastal regions and islands. Mostert specifically looks at the possible development of a *lingua franca* to enable communication between speakers whose native languages are different. He concludes that in the very complex linguistic situations existing in the medieval Northern Seas, pragmatic choices were made as to what language was used as *lingua franca*.

Next, Thomas Heebøll-Holm examines the rise and fall of the maritime empire of the Valdemarian dynasty (twelfth to fourteenth centuries). The empire created under Cnut the Great originally was as much Danish as it was English. The dynasty at first relied on the support and initiative of the Danish nobility, who had at their disposal warriors and ships, and were driven by a desire for profit from royal warfare and from trade, especially in the context of the "crusades" against the pagans living along the Baltic rim. Merchant elites from Danish towns also cooperated in the Valdemarians' imperial project. The

dynasty later co-opted foreign (German) allies and mercenaries to maintain and extend its control against an increasingly powerful and unruly nobility. However, the Germanization of the Valdemarian court and aristocracy alienated the Danish nobility with their strong overseas power bases, and this eventually eroded the foundations of the Valdemarians' Baltic empire.

Olaf Mörke takes us to the seventeenth century and the Swedish *Dominium Maris Baltici*, a term expressing the formal acknowledgment of Swedish supremacy over the Baltic Sea in a treaty concluded with the Dutch States General in 1614. The ambiguity of the term "*dominium*", oscillating between "property" and "rule", matched the complex nature of Swedish hegemony in the Baltic region. The Våsa dynasty's claim to empire in the seventeenth century was above all based on sea power and included a short-lived attempt at expansion into the Atlantic in competition with the English and the Dutch. The Våsa's did not, however, rule a centralized state. The Swedish kingdom was a typical *monarchia mixta*. The estates, in particular those of the high nobility, remained highly influential until 1718. The constant necessity to conciliate the interests of the crown and those of the estates shaped the development of the Swedish zone of influence in the Baltic in the early modern period. Mörke therefore concludes that Swedish dominance in the Baltic region was a kind of borrowed empire, because of its (financial) dependence on the estates and on the economic powers dominating trade routes in the Baltic and to northwestern Europe.

The five contributions in Part 3 are all set in the early modern period. Anjana Singh looks at the European powers that were active in the Indian Ocean in early modern times, examining the different modes of operations they adopted in the course of three centuries. She argues against the teleological historical narrative according to which the arrival of European traders in the sixteenth century led unavoidably to the creation of modern colonial empires in the nineteenth century. The Indian Ocean had been a well-connected maritime space since Antiquity, and the so-called "Age of Discovery" did not fundamentally impact the Indian Ocean trade system for several centuries. In fact, Portuguese, Dutch and British traders were merely three groups among many competing over access to seaports in the region, and often their survival was far from certain. It was only from the mid-eighteenth century that the British East Indies Company gained the upper hand over its European rivals, and subsequently gained control over parts of the Indian subcontinent, particularly along the northern coasts of the Bay of Bengal.

Peter Borschberg takes us to the Melaka Empire in southeast Asia. Based on the town of Melaka on the Malay Peninsula, the Melaka sultans from the early fifteenth to the early sixteenth century exerted control over populations in Malay, Sumatra,

the Riau Archipelago, and Borneo—lands and peoples far apart but connected to each other by the sea. Borschberg points out that pre-colonial Melaka was not a territorially defined polity evocative of a modern nation state. The Melaka Empire instead can be described as basically a network of patron-client relationships. Personal allegiances were used to gain access to maritime trading networks. Malay rulers were not preoccupied with the acquisition of territory, through conquest or otherwise. They rather sought to boost their status and thereby increase their position within the hierarchy of Asian rulers. To this end, the submission of other, lesser rulers was key. Interestingly, minor rulers (*rajas*, or "princes") who paid homage, often voluntarily, to rulers higher up in the hierarchy, could acknowledge more than one overlord at the same time. The Melaka sultan himself may have been a vassal of sorts of simultaneously the Chinese emperor and the king of Siam.

Going beyond Wallerstein's center-periphery model, Cátia Antunes discusses how recent historiography has emphasized the participation of local communities in the establishment and maintenance of the Portuguese maritime empire, as well as the institutional weaknesses of early colonial empires, which often were unable to effectively exert power in the distant territories over which they claimed sovereignty. Others again have highlighted the integration of self-organized networks of merchants, even though their economic interests could be contrary to those of the crown. These included non-European merchants and creole business groups operating also beyond the Portuguese sphere of influence. Antunes argues that informal networks and local communities were not solely responsible for the formation of the Portuguese maritime empire, adding herself a spatial component: the nodal gateways where colonial encounters took place, that is, seaports. It was from these various trade ports such as Ouidah and Macao rather than from Lisbon, that the Portuguese overseas empire emanated and was operated.

Departing from an older notion of the Dutch as "reluctant" empire-builders in early modern Southeast Asia, Remco Raben asks if there really can be something like a purely commercial empire. He concludes that the world of the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) was in fact nothing less than a maritime empire based in large part on military coercion. It was "not a closed territorial system, but a network of connections and nodes along which enormous amounts of goods, people and ideas moved around," Raben writes. The aims of the VOC were similar to those of any other empire: extraction of resources and the mobilization of manpower. Raben moreover shows that the VOC in a sense can be seen as an Asian power: the VOC not only collaborated with local rulers, but also adopted "a great variety of Asian institutions and repertoires of governance and extraction."

In the final contribution, Kris Lane, too, draws attention to ports as bases and gateways while discussing the rise and fall of the "Pirates of the Caribbean".

Pirates originally were the part-time, freelance agents of competing European powers. But piracy was outlawed and suppressed following a peak of "unsponsored piracy" between ca. 1650 and 1720, when these non-state actors established local bases, or "pirate nests", and built up a system of overlapping parasitic networks that shifted in response to the weakness or strength of state repression. "To be profitable if not entirely sustainable," Lane writes, "high seas raiding required reliable places to trade loot and refit, or simply to cash in." These rendezvous points developed into multi-ethnic merchant enclaves, or even temporary pirate republics. They also helped the development of the colonial empires, as "the gaming tables of Port Royal, Willemstad, and Petit Goâve helped transfer stolen capital into the hands of merchants who in turn helped finance the rising sugar plantation complex that ultimately made uncontrolled piracy an undesirable side effect of imperial expansion."

The index to this book was compiled by Pim Möhring and Marlous Pelger.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to emphasize that many of the general observations concerning maritime empires that were put forward in this introductory essay, actually were derived from this diverse collection of surveys—resulting from the contributors' willingness to think about maritime empires as power networks, or of power networks as empires, even as this triggered also critical evaluations of the editors' tentative assumptions that we asked the contributors to think with. I summarize these findings here.

There is first of all the model of *overlapping imperial spheres* that may be thought of as typical for maritime empires, and in addition the subsequent *interimperial competition* that was an important incentive for intra-imperial developments (Borschberg, Kirk, Lane, Mörke, Singh, Strootman, van Wijk). Three contributions pointed out the existence of unofficial "shadow networks" utilizing the same networks as the "official", imperial ones (Antunes, Lane, Raben). The complex interweaving of economic, political and social motivations in the process of empire was emphasized by five contributors (Antunes, Borschberg, Heebøll-Holm, Kelder, Raben). Fourth, the notion of *multipolarity*, as opposed to the conventional center-periphery model (Antunes, Singh, Strootman). And finally, an important point that merits more research especially in the field of ancient empire studies: the phenomenon of the commissioned *"freelance" entrepreneur* who invests in an imperial project for personal profit (Antunes, Heebøll-Holm, Strootman, Van den Eijnde).

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PART 1

The Middle Sea

CHAPTER 2

A Thousand Black Ships: Maritime Trade, Diplomatic Relations, and the Rise of Mycenae

Jorrit M. Kelder

In this chapter I discuss the role of the sea, and maritime trade in particular, in the rise of the city of Mycenae and the formation of what could be called a Mycenaean 'Great Kingdom' in the late 17th to 14th century BC. By focusing on Mycenaean activity in three 'maritime worlds' (one within the Aegean world itself, namely the Saronic Gulf – a so-called small world-, and two within the wider eastern Mediterranean, namely the eastern trade routes to Hittite Anatolia, and the route south to Egypt), I will argue that it was Mycenae's ability to dominate the small world of the Saronic Gulf that enabled it to extend its territorial claims beyond the Argolid, which in turn led to a Mycenaean presence in Anatolia and the formation of what one could call a Mycenaean Great Kingdom.

Before I start with a discussion of what may have happened in the 16th to 14th century Saronic Gulf, it is appropriate to briefly flag a point of terminology. In spite of this volume's title, I am reluctant to apply the term 'Empire' to any stage of Mycenaean history. In my view, 'Empire' suggests a fairly strong and wide-spread level of control from the centre (usually the King and his court) over outlying regions within 'the realm', through such things as regular (widespread) taxation, levies, and legislation. I doubt whether such a thing existed in any of the states of the ancient Near East, with the possible exception of New Kingdom Egypt (although even there, royal control of regions beyond the Nile valley was limited), and I see no arguments for such an imperial imprint in the Mycenaean world. Rather, I prefer to view the Mycenaean world as a typical Late Bronze Age 'Great Kingdom', where a given King ruled his own core Kingdom, whilst exercising varying, and usually limited, levels of control over neighbouring Kingdoms.[1] Typically in such Great Kingdoms, indigenous royal houses of subjugated/vassal states remained in power, and were only obliged to send regular 'tribute' and support their overlord in battle. In my view, the King of Mycenae must have been a 'Great King' by 1400 BC at the latest, controlling

1 Cf. Kelder 2010a; 2013.

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his core kingdom in the Argolid and Korinthia from his palace at Mycenae, whilst leaving the day-to-day administration in his provinces to vassal rulers at such places as Pylos (in Messenia), or Miletus (on the Anatolian west-coast).

A Small Saronic World

Having clarified this aspect of political structure in the Mycenaean world (I realise my view on this is far from generally-accepted, although a growing group of scholars now see a far greater political cohesion between the Mycenaean palaces than hitherto has been the case), I will now discuss some of the mechanisms that may have been behind the remarkable rise of Mycenae in the late 17th to 15th century BC. In keeping with this volume's central theme, I will focus on the role of maritime activity: in this case on the gradual expansion of Mycenaean control over the Saronic Gulf. By the end of the 17th century BC, the rise of Mycenae as Greece's most important palatial centre was by no means a 'given'. Whilst that centre may have already been the dominant citadel in the Argolid (I do not know of anything comparable to the wealth of Grave Circle A in the region, although other centres such as Argos and probably Tiryns were clearly also of importance during the 16th century BC), there were other centres around the Saronic Gulf that were probably of comparable importance.[2]

During the Middle Bronze Age, one centre in particular stood out and can reasonably be described as the most important centre in the Aegean outside Crete: Kolonna on Aegina, a wealthy and sizable settlement which, through the 17th and early 16th century BC, had become the major trading centre in the Saronic Gulf. Aeginitan pottery from this period is found virtually everywhere around the Saronic Gulf, but especially in the Korinthia and Attica. The so-called Aegina Treasure, a collection of especially high-quality jewellery found during clandestine digging on Aegina, testify to the wealth that was acquired, and the myriad of styles and provenances of the jewellery attest to Aegina's far-flung trading contacts with predominately Crete, but also to the Levant, during the 17th century.[3]

Whilst typically 'Greek' produce such as olives, olive oil and wine no doubt were important commodities that were traded within the Aeginite network, the silver trade may have brought Aegina its greatest wealth. There are numerous indications (and I will come back to this later) that the silver deposits in

2 See for a survey of other important sites Kelder 2005, and esp. Kelder 2008, 69; followed (albeit without references) by Crouwel 2009.

3 Cf. the various contributions in Fitton 2009.

the Laurion were already exploited during the Late Middle Bronze Age, and probably already before that period.[4] The centre that probably dominated the silver mines at that, and later, time was Thorikos, which was graced with a veritable tholos tomb in the 16th century BC. Thorikos was by no means the only important centre in southern Attika, and other sites, such as Kiapha Thiti (which controlled the northern access route to the Laurion), must also have been the centres of local chiefdoms.[5] It is likely that, because of its strategic position in the Saronic Gulf, Kolonna on Aegina was able to control the all-important sea routes from Attika to Minoan Crete, and that its control over the silver trade with Crete and beyond fuelled its rise as the preeminent site in the MH III 'Greek' world. Kolonna on Aegina, however, was not the only centre that seems to have benefitted from this silver trade.

Some 40 silver objects were recovered from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae; an enormous amount, especially when compared to the virtual absence of silver at Mycenae or any other Aegean site in the later Bronze Age times. Until very recently, it was thought that most of the silver from the Shaft Graves originated from the Laurion.[6] New research by Stos-Gale suggests that the majority of the silver from those graves came from the Carpathians.[7] Silver from the Carpathians may have come to southern Greece along with gold and perhaps other goods, but the trade routes are difficult to reconstruct.[8] Nevertheless, whilst the recent study suggests most of the Shaft Grave silver originated from the Carpathians, it also suggests that at least six objects from the Shaft graves are made of Laurion silver.[9]

One wonders how this silver reached late 17th-early 16th century BC Mycenae: silver from the Laurion region may have been brought overland, past the isthmus to Mycenae, or – more likely – by ship across the Saronic Gulf. It seems unlikely that Mycenae already exercised some sort of control over the Laurion as early as Late Helladic I (the era of the Shaft Graves), and it seems

4 E.g. Stos-Gale and Gale 1982; Spitaels 1984; Mountjoy 1995.

5 Cf. Hagel and Lauter 1987; Tartaron 2013.

6 Kelder 2016, basing himself on Stos-Gale and Gale 1982, 476.

7 Stos-Gale 2014.

8 Davis 1977 first suggested gold and silver from the Carpathians may have come to southern Greece.There is a growing understanding that relations between the Mycenaean world and the Carpathians were far more intensive than was previously thought. Drews 2017 highlights especially the relations in metalworking traditions between these two worlds, suggesting a common origin (in the region north and to the east of the Black Sea) for both. In a recent paper held at the Getty Museum in L.A. (Kelder, *forthcoming*), I have tried to further highlight some aspects of Balkan – Aegean interaction, including the exchange of mercenaries.

9 Stos-Gale 2014, 196–198.

equally implausible to attribute the wealth in the Shaft Graves exclusively to successful raids. Instead, it can be argued that these objects arrived at Mycenae in the context of gift exchange amongst early Late Helladic chiefs and trade,[10] and thus is likely to have arrived at Mycenae via (rather than despite) the Aeginite trading network. The unparalleled quantity of silver in the Shaft Graves must signify an important increase in the prestige and wealth of the lords of the hitherto fairly inconspicuous centre of Mycenae. It remains unclear what triggered this sudden surge in wealth and prestige, but one explanation may be found across the Mediterranean, in Egypt.

From the Aegean to the Nile

In an important, but largely overlooked 1987 article, Joseph Maran argued that there are strong indications that the et-Tôd Treasure, named after the Middle Egyptian site of et-Tôd, is the product of Mycenaean workshops.[11] The treasure includes one gold and a staggering 153 silver cups, as well as a number of (mostly lapis lazuli) seals, 10 gold ingots, 20 silver chains (which are believed to be a type of ingot) and 13 silver, oval bar-shaped ingots. Hitherto dated to the Egyptian 12th dynasty (thus excluding any possible link with the Mycenaean world), Maran argued that the style of the metalwork indicates that the objects from et-Tôd belong in fact to the (early) Shaft Grave era, i.e. the final stages of the Middle Helladic period (the 17th century BC). I should add a disclaimer here, for Maran's suggestions have not found wide-spread acceptance. One major problem in identifying metalwork as 'Mycenaean', especially for such an early stage of Mycenaean civilization, is our very limited understanding of metalwork traditions in Middle Bronze Age and Mycenaean Greece and neighbouring areas (including the Cyclades and Anatolia).[12] Nonetheless, at least for some of the material from et-Tôd, most notably the *kantharoi*, there are good Mycenaean parallels, suggesting that the connections between the early Mycenaean Greek mainland and Egypt may have already been much stronger than has hitherto been thought.[13] This, in turn, may explain the amount of gold, which presumably was imported mostly, though not exclusively, from Egypt,

10 E.g Burns 2010, 78 ff.

11 Maran 1987.

12 Oliver Dickinson, pers. comm. (10 April 2015).

13 Other objects from the material from et-Tôd, such as the cups, cannot easily be linked to any known metalworking tradition.

that has been recovered from the Shaft Graves.[14] Moreover, if Maran is right, it may also signal cracks in Aeginitan control over the trade routes south, and may explain why Mycenae seems to have enjoyed a special relation with Egypt in later (15th to 13th) centuries.[15]

Regardless of these details, it is clear these early contacts between Mycenae and Egypt, if they indeed existed, did not dramatically challenge Aeginetan dominance in the region. Indeed, during the 16th and early 15th century BC, Kolonna remained the dominant trading centre in the Saronic, and Aeginitan pottery remains the dominant 'import' of many coastal (and some inland) communities on or near the shores of the Saronic Gulf. It seems that Aeginitan pre-eminence in this trading network never materialised into something more tangible; there are no indications for Aeginite colonization in Korinthia or Attika, nor are there any significant breaks in local developments in terms of material culture in those areas. In fact, it has been stated that, in contrast to the Argolid, the material culture of especially southern Attika – the Laurion – remains distinctly Middle Helladic in character until well in the 15th century BC. In short, the 16th and early 15th century BC 'small maritime world' of the Saronic Gulf can broadly be described in terms of parity, with several significant centres participating on a more or less equal footing in a network of trade and exchange. Kolonna does appear to have been somewhat more significant that the others, but only ever so slightly, and then only because of its strategic position in the centre of this network.

This situation, however, did not last. Towards the end of the 15th century, archaeology shows a momentous shift in the distribution of pottery around the Saronic Gulf, and the destruction of what was probably the residence of the ruler of Kolonna. Whilst Kolonna was not abandoned, its administrative centre was not rebuilt after the destruction in LH IIB, and in LH IIIA1 and a pottery kiln was built in the building's remains. At the same time, the number of sites around the Saronic Gulf almost doubles, and at a number of sites, there are clear indications of Argive/Mycenaean influence on the material culture.[16] Megali Magoula, a site on the southeastern coast of Troezenia, which had already been of importance during the late Middle Bronze Age and hitherto seemed to have particularly strong cultural ties to Aegina, seems to have

14 Maran cautions that the silver from et-Tôd may have reached Egypt via middlemen on Cyprus or in the Levant. Whilst this possibility cannot be excluded, the impression of uniformity –the 153 silver cups to my (untrained) eye seemed to be the work of a single workshop- seems to argue for a single (direct) shipment.

15 Cf. Cline 1998; Kelder 2009 with references.

16 Siennicka 2002, 184–187.

become 'Mycenaeanized' during LH IIB. The most vivid testimony to this is the erection of two tholos tombs of clear Mycenaean design (as opposed to an earlier LH I tomb, which may or may not recall Cretan tholos tombs).[17] On the opposite shore of the Saronic Gulf, notable changes in the material culture of the hitherto prosperous settlement of Thorikos suggest this site, too, was drawn into the Mycenaean orbit. Indeed, it has been suggested that the sudden arrival of Argive pottery and, more importantly, the construction of a Mycenaean style tholos, may signify the establishment of a new dynasty at Thorikos.[18] In a recent and important monograph, Thomas Tartaron has argued that the late 15th and early 14th century BC (LH IIB and LH IIIA1) saw the development of Mycenaean hegemony over what had hitherto been a predominantly Aeginite trading network in the Saronic Gulf.[19] Basing his argument especially on the chronological and spatial distribution of pottery, but also on the construction of typically Argive monuments such as the tholoi at Megali Magoula, he suggests that the decline of Kolonna in the late 15th century BC and the apparent rise of regions close to Mycenae, especially Troezenia, at the same time, were somehow related. Tartaron also argued that political structures and trade patterns within the 'small world' of the Saronic Gulf, towards the end of the 15th century BC, were reconfigured when the Saronic trade network became part of the larger 'world system' of Late Bronze Age international trade, and although he did not specify the exact causes that caused this gradual change of a small maritime world into a large maritime world, it may well be that the tightening of bonds between Mycenae and Egypt triggered this transformation. I argue that the need to secure access to the silver deposits in the Laurion may have forced the rulers of early Mycenae to gradually expand their territorial control towards southern Attika, whilst the overseas silver trade with Egypt generated the wealth and prestige that was required for this eastwards expansion.

The evidence for such a scenario does not exclusively come from archaeological data from the Greek world, but also from Egypt. Precisely at the time when Aeginite influence over the Saronic seems to have been waning, Mycenae is reported to engage in diplomatic gift exchange with the King of Egypt. The relevant text is a passage from the Annals of Thutmoses III, arguably the greatest warrior King Egypt ever knew. According to the Annals, in ca. 1437 BC, whilst on campaign in northern Syria, Thutmoses III received an envoy from the 'Prince of Tanaju', bringing him *'a silver shawabti-vessel in Keftiuan*

17 Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2010, 72–73.

18 Servais 1969, 68; Gasche and Servais 1971, 21 ff.

19 Tartaron 2013.

workmanship together with four bowls of copper with handles of silver. Total 56 deben 4 kite'.[20] Keftiu has long been recognized as the Egyptian designation for Crete, whereas Tanaju is now understood as the Egyptian term for mainland Greece, with Mycenae as its principal centre.[21] Thutmoses' annals thus seem to indicate that, already in the (advanced) 15th century BC, Mycenae was already involved in international gift exchange. The prominence of silver vessels in the gift for Thutmoses III is, in my opinion, significant and further suggests an interest in, and by this time probably control over, the Laurion mines.

Pharaonic Regalia and the Rise of Mycenae

The importance of this cannot be overstated, and the impact that these contacts with the land of the Pharaohs must have made back home in the Mycenaean world, must have been tremendous. The aforementioned Kom el Hetan text indicates these contacts persisted into the reign of Amenhotep III. This Pharaoh, in particular, seems to have had close relations with the Mycenaean world: scarabs and other objects – such as a famous blue faience monkey – bearing the King's royal cartouche have been found at various centres in the Aegean that were listed in the Kom el Hetan text.[22] Mycenae, however, seems to have been the focus of the Pharaoh's attention, and several objects from his reign have been recovered at that site. Most importantly, this included a number – the current count suggests 11- of unique faience plaques, all bearing the royal cognomen of both sides.[23]

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20 Annals of Thutmoses III; cf. Strange 1980, 50–51; Haider 1988, 10, reads 'iron cups' with handles of silver.

21 That Tanaju was indeed situated in the Aegean is confirmed in a later text, dating to the reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390–1353 BC). This text, a long list of states describing the world then known to the Egyptians, is incised on the bases of colossal statues of Amenhotep III in his mortuary temple at present-day Kom el Hetan. On one of these bases, Tanaju is listed immediately following Keftiu, which, considering the grouping of other (known) states in the list, suggests that Tanaju lay in roughly the same direction as Keftiu, although further. Whilst its grouping with Keftiu already indicates that Tanaju must be situated in the Aegean, evidence for its exact position is provided in a second column, listing the cities and principal regions of Keftiu and Tanaju. Although a number of these have not been conclusively identified, the identifications of Mycenae and Nauplion, as well as Kythera, Messenia and the Thebaid (notably the region around Thebes, but not Thebes itself) are now widely accepted. Cf. Kelder 2010b; Cline and Stannish 2011 and references therein.

22 Cf. Cline 1998, with references therein.

23 Philips and Cline 2005, 327; Kelder 2010a, 68.

These plaques have been the object of much study, and whilst it remains unclear how they were used in their Mycenaean setting, it does seem likely that the Mycenaeans were aware of the original symbolic and ritual importance such objects had in Egypt. One fragment of a plaque was found in a tin vessel in the Cult Centre, in a late 13th century BC context – suggesting that even towards the end of the Mycenaean era, these objects were held in particular esteem.[24] There are various indications that contacts between Mycenae and Egypt endured until the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces, and I have argued elsewhere that these contacts, at least in part conducted in the context of royal gift exchange, involved the trade in olives and olive oil, as well as the possible stationing of Mycenaean warriors in Pharaoh's army (as is suggested by a unique papyrus from El Amarna).[25]

The picture that thus arises is one of disintegration on the one hand, and expansion on the other. The disintegration of Aegina as a major player in maritime trade in the Small World of the Saronic in the period 1450–1350 BC, as evidenced by first the decline of Aeginite exports to regions surrounding the Saronic and then, at some point in LH IIB, the actual destruction of the main administrative building at Kolonna, coincides with an increase of Mycenaean cultural traits in various regions around the Saronic, and the development of trade relations between Mycenae and Egypt. Whilst this cannot be conclusively proven, I think it is realistic to assume that these developments were related, and that the intensification of Mycenae's connections with Egypt resulted in greater wealth and prestige for its rulers, which in turn fuelled territorial ambitions – in all likelihood focused primarily on consolidating access to the silver mines of the Laurion.

Coming towards the end of this paper, it may be appropriate to briefly illustrate the effects of Mycenaean expansion during LH IIB and LH IIIA in another arena; this time in the eastern Aegean. I have argued that at some point during the period 1450–1350 BC – roughly speaking the time of Thutmoses III to Amenhotep III- Mycenae's need for silver to fuel its profitable connections with Egypt resulted in the Mycenaean annexation of Attika and the Laurion mines. The erection of Mycenaean-style tholos tombs at Thorikos in Attika

24 Kelder 2010a, 68; see also Burns 2010, 20–25, with extensive discussion on the possible Mycenaean manufacture of the plaques based on chemical analysis of two fragments. Although the chemical composition of these plaques may be consistent with Mycenaean faience rather than Egyptian faience, the palaeography of the royal cognomen on the plaques strongly argues for an Egyptian origin or, possibly, an Egyptian craftsmen that was involved in the creation of these unique plaques at Mycenae.

25 Cf. Kelder 2009; 2010b.

and, in Troezenia, Megali Magoula, may reflect the installation of local vassals, whose rule was given added lustre with Argive royal iconography. The annexation of Attika, however, was not the end-station of Mycenaean expansion. Quite the contrary, in fact, for it opened up the sea-routes via the Cyclades towards western Anatolia.

Hittite sources suggest that, again around 1400 BC, Mycenaeans – in Hittite texts referred to as people from Ahhiyawa – for the first time set foot on the Anatolian west-coast. Both the texts and archaeology indicate that at some point soon thereafter the settlement of Millawanda (Miletus) became the major Mycenaean foothold in Anatolia. It remains fiercely debated whether Ahhiyawa was a Hittite designation for a specific Mycenaean kingdom or whether it was a more generic term, designating the Mycenaean region in general, without any political connotation. I have argued elsewhere that it is plausible to consider Ahhiyawa as the Hittite designation for the Kingdom of Mycenae, and thus that Tanaju and Ahhiyawa were one and the same.[26] If Ahhiyawa is indeed the same as Tanaju, and if these two toponyms do indeed refer to the Kingdom of Mycenae, the impression gained from the texts, and if the spread of the Mycenaean cultural koine is anything to go by, the general trend is one of accelerated territorial expansion following the annexation of the regions surrounding the Saronic Gulf, via the islands in the Aegean towards the Anatolian west coast. It may be more than coincidence that the first archaeological evidence for truly monumental palaces at the sites of Mycenae and Tiryns – although there certainly were earlier 'palatial' centres at those sites – date to precisely this period; LH IIIA, the first half of the 14th century BC and that various similarities have been observed between Anatolian (Hittite) and Mycenaean palaces.[27]

Epilogue: Maritime Developments and the Collapse of Long-Distance Overseas Trade

I hope to have demonstrated that Mycenae's ability to gain effective control over maritime trade routes, both in the small world of the Saronic Gulf and in the big world of the eastern Mediterranean, allowed its elite to achieve a

26 Kelder 2010a.

27 Cf. Thaler 2007 for parallels between the Mycenaean and Hittite world in the construction and use of palatial architecture. Contacts between Mycenae and Anatolia intensified during the 13th century BC: cf. Blackwell 2014 for the use of Hittite tools and techniques in the creation and repair of the Lion gate relief at Mycenae during LH IIIB.

FIGURE 2.1 The Gurob ship-cart model
PHOTO J. KELDER

preeminent status amongst and, eventually, power over, their competitors elsewhere in the Aegean. I also hope to have shown that the quest for metals, first and foremost, are likely to have guided Mycenae's territorial expansion: eastwards (to the Laurion and ultimately Anatolia), to the north (towards the metal sources of Chalkidiki and the routes to the ore-rich Carpathians), and to the south, via Crete, to Egypt (and Cyprus). Whilst much of what I have argued must remain conjecture, new finds and new interpretations of old material increasingly seems to support the notion that the Mycenaean world was not only far more politically coherent, but also far more closely involved in international trade and diplomacy than hitherto thought. To illustrate this last point, I will end with this picture of a ship-cart, which was found in a tomb dated to ca. 1200 BC in Egyptian Gurob (Figure. 2.1). In a recent study, Shelly Wachsmann has identified this as an accurate representation of a Late Helladic penteconter, which may have been used during religious ceremonies by groups of foreigners (originally perhaps mercenary troops) stationed at Gurob.[28]

28 Wachsmann 2012.

Whilst Wachsmann plausibly suggested that the owner of this ship-cart – probably one of the 'Sherden', a group of Sea Peoples who are known to have been settled at Gurob in the Rammesside era – may have had Urnfield roots, the ships paint is remarkably consistent with Homer's description of the Achaean ships headed for Troy: the Achaeans' Black Ships, and, in the case of Odysseus' flotilla, the red-cheeked (μιλτοπάρῃος) ships.[29] In view of the, by that time ancient, links between Egypt and the Mycenaean world, I find it quite conceivable that, amongst these mercenaries, there was a contingent of Mycenaean Greeks.

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29 Cf. J. Emanuel, 'Odysseus Boat?' Presented as part of the 2013–14 lecture series 'Discovery of the Classical World', hosted by the Department of the Classics at Harvard University (unpublished but available online at http://www.academia.edu/6928217/Odysseus_Boat_Bringing_Homers_Epics_to_Life_with_New_Mycenaean_Evidence_from_Ramesside_Egypt_DCW_Lecture_).

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CHAPTER 3

The "First Athenian Empire"? Athenian Overseas Interests in the Archaic Period

Floris van den Eijnde

Introduction

Athens' naval hegemony in the Classical period (480–323)[1] is a stock narrative of historical textbooks and hardly needs recounting. By 483, the Athenians had acquired a great new source of wealth with the discovery of a large silver vein in the Laurion area of southern Attica.[2] When it was proposed that the money be used to pay each adult citizen a sum of ten drachmas, the Athenian statesman Themistokles intervened, proposing that the money be spent on a naval program, the scope of which the Ancient world had seldom seen.[3] This program resulted in the construction of a fleet that at the outbreak of the second Greco-Persian war would number two hundred triremes, the most advanced warships of the day, and a huge new harbor at Piraeus.[4] Although these ships were initially intended to combat Athens' archenemy Aegina, the Athenians ended up using them to destroy the Persian navy that accompanied Xerxes at Salamis during his invasion of Greece in 480.[5] Cut off from their important maritime forage routes, the Persian army was routed the next year at the Battle of Plataia, leaving to the Athenians the control of the entire Aegean Sea and a dominant position in the Eastern Mediterranean. This naval dominance was largely centered on the Aegean and formed the basis of the Athenian Empire, ended by the Spartans in 404, but reconstituted not much later during the Second Athenian Empire (378–355).

Thucydides emphasizes that the Athenians did not "become sailors until they were forced by the Medes", thus suggesting that they, ironically, owed their

1 All dates before common era.

2 Hdt. 7.144.

3 On Themistokles' navy bill, see Labarbe 1957; Wallinga 1992, 148–157.

4 Wallinga 1992, 148–54, following *Ath.Pol.* 22.7, believes the number of ships proposed by Themistokles to have been 100, which van Wees 2010, 223 believes were *additional* to an existing fleet of 100, bringing the total number of ships at Salamis to 200, the number Herodotus erroneously assigned to Themistokles' naval bill.

5 Hdt. 7.144.2; Plut., *Them.* 4.

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empire to the Persian invasions, as well as to Themistokles' great act of foresight.[6] This view is generally accepted, for example in two influential works on the Athenian Empire, the monumental monograph by Russel Meiggs and a shorter treatise by Peter Rhodes.[7] Both works take the Greek-Persian conflict and the adoption of Themistokles' proposal as the starting point for their historical narrative and indeed this is the way in which the Empire is generally treated in Greek history handbooks. But presenting Athenian naval hegemony as having sprung *ex novo* from Themistokles' head, so to speak, does too little justice to the extensive maritime interests that existed before the Greco-Persian conflict and upon which the Classical Empire was built.

The Athenian economy of the Archaic period (ca. 700–480) is largely understood to have revolved around agricultural production, an enterprise controlled by a small but wealthy aristocratic clique.[8] This view is closely related to the observation that, in the Archaic period, the Athenians did not take part in the colonizing movement that brought Greeks to the shores of Spain, France, Italy, Sicily, Africa, and the Black Sea littoral, because they had ample agricultural land of their own to sustain a growing population.[9] The non-colonization argument, however, does too little justice to the possibility that the principal impetus for migration may not always have been a desire for land as much as the trading opportunities offered by opening up new markets and channeling previously untapped resources into the larger Mediterranean trading networks.[10] A more pressing problem with this understanding of an inward-looking society, not committing itself to overseas enterprises, is the evidence derived both from literary sources (Herodotus most of all), and archaeology,

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6 Thuc. 7.21.3. Herodotus' account (7.144.2) differs slightly in identifying the pending war with Aegina as the true impetus for building a navy, although, here too, the net outcome was that the decision "saved Hellas by compelling the Athenians to become seamen", establishing Athenian Naval hegemony. For the imperial implications of Themistokles' proposal and his tactical inclusion of a looming war with Aegina, see Kallet-Marx 2008, 202–204, and n. 56.

7 Meiggs 1972; Rhodes 1985. Characteristically, Hornblower 2002[3], 9 speaks of Themistokles' hardline approach toward the Spartans in 479/8 as "the first hint of imperial pretensions". See also de Romilly 1963, 13; Haas 1985, 29. For a dissenting view, see Bloedow 1975.

8 The most comprehensive and, in my view, most successful treatment of aristocratic land tenure (and its political implications) is still Foxhall 1997. For a general account of the Athenian economy in the Archaic period, see van Wees 2013.

9 E.g. Coldstream 1977, 135; Osborne 1989, 313, 321. For the movement of "internal colonization" in general, see Snodgrass 1980, 22–23; Lauter 1985, 87–88; Mersch 1997, 46; Hall 2006, 220; van den Eijnde 2010, 335, 367.

10 Recent scholarship shows how Greek colonial enterprises were channeled into pre-existing trade networks, e.g. Malkin 2011, 22, 154. The Phokaian colonization of the Rhone estuary is illustrative, cf. Dietler 2010.

epigraphy and numismatics, which suggest a surge in Athenian military and economic activities in the northern Aegean from the end of the seventh century and throughout the Archaic period down to the Greco-Persian conflict. Notably, these activities were to form the core of the classical Delian-Attic League.

Therefore, rather than discussing the unrivalled Athenian maritime power of the fifth century that brought the city to the forefront of the Greek *oikoumene*, I will focus on the century and a half preceding Themistokles' proposal to build a standing, polis-controlled navy. I do not intend to make a case for Athenian maritime hegemony in the Archaic period, but to show how some of its core (strategic and economic) interests abroad where already in play well before the outbreak of the Greco-Persian conflict. In particular, I will show that aristocratic rivalry in the sixth century propelled the Athenians to the Thracian coast and the Hellespont in a bid to control the Macedonian timber trade, Thracian silver production and the lucrative grain imports from the Euxine region. Beginning with an overview of Athenian naval capacity in the Archaic period (ca. 750–480), I will follow up with an investigation of the overseas exploits of the main aristocratic factions, the Peisistratids, the Philaidai and the Alkmeonidai, showing how systematically and seemingly independent from each other these families conducted their own foreign policy to secure the resources flowing through the Aegean.

Athenian Naval Power before Peisistratos

What would something like a "navy" have looked like in Archaic Athens? The first part of an answer to this question is intimately connected with the way the polis was organized. In the Greek city-states of the Archaic period, poleis were generally governed by several aristocratic families sharing in the responsibilities and benefits of the polis. In some cases, one such family might come to dominate the polis' affairs, resulting in the establishment of tyrannical rule, as indeed happened in Athens with the dominion of Peisistratos and, after him, his sons.[11] Accordingly, constitutions of Archaic poleis were first and foremost concerned with keeping factional strive within bounds by devising ways for the propertied classes to share power at home.[12] Foreign affairs comprised a domain left to the families, whose leaders used both soft power, in the form of *xenia*, personal alliances in the form of mutual guest-friendship,[13] or hard

11 On the tyranny of Peisistratos, see Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2000; Lavelle 2005.

12 Foxhall 1997.

13 E.g. Herman 1987.

power, in the form of military enterprises to promote their own private interests, which did not always align with the interests of the commonwealth. For this reason, it is problematic to speak of a "navy" proper, as it implies more cohesion than was actually the case. Ships and their crews were outfitted and recruited by the aristocrats who paid all expenses and could therefore count on "their" part of the fleet.[14] For this reason, I agree with Christopher Haas in preferring to speak of a polis' *naval power* instead of using the word *navy* with its implications of a cohesive "state" in control of a unified fleet.[15]

The second aspect to consider is the type of ship implicated by such "naval power". In other words, what did a warship look like? With the invention of the battering ram in the Early Iron Age, naval warfare was transformed in the sense that, for the first time in history, ships came to be used as weapons.[16] The invention of the ram also meant that warships had to be propelled mainly by human force, aided by sail when winds were favorable. It has been debated whether a purely wind-driven, commercial vessel—known to have existed in the Bronze Age—existed as early as the Archaic period, a notion effectively dispelled by Wallinga, who argued from the iconographic evidence that all ships during this time were galleys and served both a military and a commercial purpose.[17]

The basic type of all-purpose ship in the Mediterranean during the Archaic period was the *pentekonter*, a fifty-oared ship. "Pentekonter" is a conventional name to describe a type of long and narrow ship (ratio ca. 10:1) with a long-curving stern and prow, that was in use throughout the first half of the first millennium. These ships figure in the Homeric epics as "hollow", i.e. without deck, although they probably did have minor raised platforms, both in front and in the back, that could be used for the purpose of navigation.[18] In practice, such ships could be outfitted with as little as 20 or as much as 100 rowers.[19] A famous Geometric louterion (ca. 735) from the British Museum shows a pentekonter

14 Cf. Haas 1985, 40.

15 Haas 1985, 30; compare the use of "ship power" in the title of Wallinga 1992. See van Wees 2013, 64–68 for the measure of state control over Athenian naval power.

16 Casson 1971, 49 dates the invention of the ram to the Early Iron Age, or ca. 1000, Strauss 2008, 224 to the eighth century.

17 Wallinga 1992, 33–41. Purely commercial vessels—known in later antiquity as *strongylai*—had a strongly pronounced, rounded hull, to accommodate as much cargo as possible and was predominantly propelled by wind, aided only by manpower (oars) when wind was lacking or when entering or leaving port. No such vessels have been positively attested for the Archaic period.

18 *Il*. 1.476; *Od*. 9.150–51; 168–69. For the decks: *Od.* 12.229–230, cf. Casson 1971, 44, 51–53.

19 Casson 1971, 44–45.

FIGURE 3.1 Late Geometric I spouted crater (louterion) from Athens. Cat. No. 1899.2-19.1 PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

outfitted with a battering ram and a double steering-oar, presumably reflecting the standard design of the day (Figure. 3.1).[20]

This versatile ship could be used both for long-distance trade and piracy/warfare, occupations that often went hand in hand in the Early Iron Age as well as in the Archaic period.[21] Herodotus mentions that the Phocaeans, inhabitants of the Aeolic coast of Asia Minor, ventured out into the western Mediterranean in pentekonters, which they used both to conduct trade with the metropolis and—after their forced removal from their homeland by the Persians—to transport their population westwards and engage in a large-scale naval battle with a combined Etruscan and Carthaginian force.[22] This episode is illuminating because it shows the violent nature of long distant trade, where commercial enterprises could be compromised by competitors and, no doubt, by hostile native populations. It also shows that trade and migration were part of a single continuum: once a long-distance network was established, both people and commodities could flow freely. The pentekonter was the perfect vessel for this, combining military capabilities with sufficient cargo-space.

As early as the eighth century, experiments adding to the propulsive force led to the creation of a full deck, stretching from stern to prow, which allowed for an additional level of rowers.[23] A battle scene on a Geometric

20 British Museum 1899.2-19.1.

21 Cf. Snodgrass 1983; van Wees 2013, 31.

22 Hdt. 1.163–166, cf. Snodgrass 1983; Haas 1985, 35; Wallinga 1992, 67–83.

23 Casson 1971, 53–60. For a collection of ship-scenes on Late Geometric vases, see Ahlberg-Cornell 1971, 25–38.

vase indicates that the deck could also be used for hand-to-hand combat once a ship had been entered.[24] The name usually attached to such a vessel is "bireme", a modern term that has been coined on analogy of "trireme" and one that was not used in antiquity.[25] The "double-decker" was probably a Phoenician innovation, although several Geometric vases made in Athens—including the one in Figure 3.1—already hint at this feature as early as the late eighth century.[26] Experiments with an additional third deck appear to have been conducted in the seventh century, when Necho, pharaoh of Egypt, is credited with building a number of *trieres*, or "triremes", a new type of ship specifically designed for military purposes.[27] In Greece, the trireme was slow to be adopted, perhaps not until the second half of the sixth century when it was introduced there by the Corinthians.[28] Still, even at the outbreak of the Greco-Persian conflict, most of the Greek ships were said to have been pentekonters.[29]

In this light, Themistokles' proposal to build a huge fleet of triremes would seem to represent not only a revolution in terms of quantity, but no doubt also in quality. It has been shown, however, that Themistokles' naval bill was part of a larger naval arms race that transformed the Athenian fleet in a mere two decades from the 20 ships, presumably already triremes, sent to Ionia in 498 to the 200 galleys deployed at Salamis.[30] The adoption of the trireme, on that view, seems to have occurred in the early years of the democracy.

Athenian maritime exploits may have experienced a golden age in the later ninth and first half of the eighth century. Coldstream interpreted the prolific nautical imagery on Late Geometric Ia vases (ca. 750) as a way to commemorate a generation of Athenian maritime entrepreneurs who traded Athenian pottery throughout the Aegean, as is evidenced by the wide distribution of Athenian product in the period immediately preceding these scenes.[31] When this generation was beginning to die off around the middle of the century and boat-scenes first appear in vase painting, Attic exports went into apparent decline. Coldstream connected this with a naval conflict with Aegina recorded by Herodotus, which ended disastrously for Athens with an embargo imposed on

24 Ahlberg-Cornell 1971, 28, figs. 29–30 (New York 34.11.2).
25 Pentekonters with an added, full deck were also called *dikrotos*, cf. Wallinga 1992, 53–63.
26 Casson 1971, 71–74.
27 Hdt. 2.159.1. For the introduction of the trireme in Greece, see Wallinga 1992, 102–129.
28 Thuc. 1.13.2. Cf. Morrison and Williams 1968, 129, 158–159.
29 Thuc. 1.14.
30 van Wees 2010, 223.
31 Coldstream 1977, 135.

its goods.[32] This would accord well with a sudden lapse of Attic imports found on Aegina from the third quarter of the eighth century.[33] We have to keep in mind, however, that exports are not necessarily indicative of the mobility of the exporters and may be the result of trade by a third party. Moreover, the connection with an event that Herodotus expressly places in the remote distance must, for obvious reasons, remain tenuous.

In any case, by the end of the eighth century, Attic ceramic exports in the Aegean were eclipsed by vases of Corinthian manufacture. Strategically placed to control the Isthmus, which connects the Peloponnese to the mainland, and the hub of a trading network that comprised a host of colonies extending through the Corinthian Gulf, the Adriatic and as far out as Sicily, Corinth dominated Greek trade with the Central Mediterranean down to the middle of the sixth century and was even in a position to supply both allies and competitors with shipping technology, including the new state of the art trireme.[34] Samos likewise dominated the pottery trade in the Aegean and as far out as Egypt and North Africa. In the sixth century, the Samian tyrant Polykrates, having adopted the trireme at an early stage, is reported to have commanded as much as one hundred pentekonters to boot, creating a great new harbor through the construction of a vast mole to protect the Samian fleet.[35] Finally, nearby Aegina too appears to have overshadowed Athens as a dynamic center of trade (and piracy) throughout much of the Archaic period, its currency, the "Aeginetan Turtle", finding wide acceptance throughout the Aegean.[36]

In many respects, the traditional account of an inward-looking society holds true for Athens at least down to the end of the seventh century.[37] In the words of Christopher Haas "Athens was late in acquiring naval force, and such naval power as she had was second-class in comparison with other Greek states in the Late Archaic period."[38] And indeed, it is not until the second half of the sixth century that Athens began to make up to its competitors by cornering the market for Black-Figure pottery—though we must again be cautious not to overemphasize the connection between exports and active trade.[39]

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32 Hdt. 5.82–8. On the wars with Aegina see Andrewes 1936, for the embargo see Dunbabin 1936.

33 Coldstream 1977, 135.

34 Hdt. 6.89.

35 Hdt. 3.39.4. For the prominent role played by Samos in sixth century maritime developments, see Wallinga 1992, 84–101.

36 Metcalf 2012, 106–109.

37 Osborne 1989.

38 Haas 1985, 29.

39 Cf. Boardman 1979.

By the end of the seventh century, however, we find the Athenians actively looking to pick up the crumbs left them by the principal naval powers. Athens' first recorded foreign venture led them to the Troad. In the eighth or seventh century a settlement, Sigeion, had been founded there by Mytilenaeans from Lesbos, who also held a stronghold at Achilleion, ca. 7 km to the south.[40] According to Herodotus, an Athenian named Phrynon, who had been Olympic victor in 636, took Sigeion by force. This gave rise to a prolonged period of warfare with the remaining Mytilenaeans at Achilleion, in the course of which the poet Alcaeus famously saved his life but lost his shield—which the Athenians duly dedicated in the sanctuary of Athena at Sigeion.[41] Phrynon was eventually defeated in single combat by Pittacus of Mytilene and when the Athenians appealed to Periander to arbitrate the dispute, the Corinthian tyrant decided in favor of the Athenians on the grounds that they had taken part in the Trojan War and could claim to have had an active hand in the destruction of nearby Ilion (Troy). The Mytilenaeans, on the other hand, who had dwelled in the Troad for centuries, were considered Aeolian late-comers and were judged unable to lay a proper claim to the land.[42]

Athenian interest in this area is highly significant and indicative of its aims and interests abroad. Sigeion held great strategic importance, controlling the passage through the Hellespont and onward to the grain-rich coasts of the Black Sea.[43] "Control" presumably did not entail a potential blockade of the straits; rather, the settlement at Sigeion allowed the Athenians a share in the economic benefits of the Euxine trade by effectively creating a last place of anchorage for tradesmen before embarking on the hazardous journey through the treacherous currents of the Hellespont.[44] The fact that the Athenians fought so hard for the control of Sigeion is indicative of their aspirations to become a dominant player in the Northern Aegean.[45]

Such is the state of our knowledge about Athenian foreign affairs before the middle of the sixth century, a time when Athens itself suffered from internal strife between three aristocratic factions—the Peisistratids, the Philaidai and the Alkmeonidai—culminating in Peisistratos' rise to tyranny. Owing to Herodotus' interest in relaying the historical events leading up to the Greco-Persian

40 Hdt. 5.94.1, Str. 13.1.38.

41 Str. 13.1.38, Val. Max. 6.5 ext. 1, Polyaen., *Strategemata* 1.25.1, Schol. (*vetus*) in A. *Eum.* 398c, Suda s.v. Πιττάκος. The Alcaeus episode: Alc. fr. 428a Lobel-Page (= Str. 13.1.38); Hdt 5.95.1. For further references see Figueira 1991, 132-131; 2008, 429–430.

42 Hdt. 5.94.2.

43 Graham 1982, 121.

44 Jeffery 1976, 89; Andrewes 1982, 374; Isaac 1986, 165–166.

45 Graham 1982, 121–122.

conflict—which necessarily included Peisistratid dominion—we are much better informed about the second half of the sixth century than the period that came before. Herodotus' account contains several brief references to the overseas enterprises of each of the three factions, presenting us with a precious insight into the way the Athenians exerted their influence abroad, before the hostilities with the Persians.

The Peisistratids

The strategically placed settlement at Sigeion in the northwestern Troad—where we have seen Athenians maintaining a presence as early as the late seventh century—remained an important foreign stronghold throughout the sixth century.[46] At some point, however, Sigeion appears to have been lost to the Athenians. Herodotus mentions that Peisistratus reconquered the city "at spear's point", establishing his bastard son, Hegesistratos, as tyrant—an event that appears to have taken place in the years around 550.[47] After Peisistratos' death in 527, his legitimate son, the Athenian tyrant Hippias, ruled the town.[48] With the end of Peisistratid tyranny at Athens in 510/9, Hippias was banished from the city and retired to Sigeion. The picture that emerges mostly from Herodotus' account suggests that the Peisistratids ruled Sigeion as a personal fief from the middle of the sixth century down to the Second Persian War, when it was absorbed into the Delian League.

This account is corroborated by archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic sources. Archaeology in particular reinforces the notion of an Athenian colony surrounded by Aeolic settlements. Excavations conducted by Manfred Korfmann indicate that the settlement at Achilleion represented an important Mytilenaean stronghold on the mainland throughout the sixth century.[49] At Sigeion, on the other hand, no evidence of an Aeolic presence at this time has come to light. Instead, a graffito in Attic lettering on a Middle Corinthian

46 For a comprehensive account of Athenian activity here, see Isaac 1986, 162–166, in addition to the historical treatment by Berve 1937, 26–36.

47 Hdt. 5.94.1. Graham 1982, 121 dates the seizure of Sigeion to Peisistratos' third tyranny (546), though he mistakenly attributes Hegesistratos with the conquest. On the other hand, the fact that Peisistratos had his hands free to conquer Sigeion suggests the possibility of a slightly earlier date in between the second and third tyrannies. The establishment of Hegesistratos as tyrant could then be attributed to his father's third seizure of power at Athens.

48 Hdt. 5.65.3, 5.91.1, 5.94.1 Th. 6.59.4, Plu. *De Herod.* 854e.

49 Korfmann 1988; Kossatz 1988.

FIGURE 3.2 Coin from Sigeion, ca. 500, with Athena on the obverse and an owl with the lettering HIΠ (Hippias) on the reverse (Babelon 1906, 8)

aryballos, dated to the first half of the sixth century, reinforces the notion of an Athenian presence at Sigeion.[50] A second inscription was certainly set up in Sigeion, by the Athenian colonists Haisopos and his brothers.[51] Jeffery tentatively dated the inscription to the second quarter of the sixth century, although a later date of inscription in the Peisitratid era has been suggested as well.[52] While not implicating the Peisistratids directly, both inscriptions reinforce the notion of early Athenian control at Sigeion. A direct reference to the Peisistratids can, however, be found on a coin, minted at Sigeion, bearing the head of Athena on the obverse and the name of Hippias and the Athenian owl on the reverse (Figure. 3.2).[53] The coin neatly expresses the dual nature of the settlement in the later Archaic period; apparently, the colony was considered at once a part of the Athenian commonwealth and a personal fiefdom of the Peisistratids.

But the long arm of the Peisistratids was not felt by the Troad Aeolians alone. During his second exile (556–546), Peisistratos set out to build a powerful network of alliances in the northern Aegean. Building on his friendship with the Eretrian nobility, he began "collecting contributions from all the cities that owed them anything. Many of these gave great amounts, the Thebans more than any …"[54] With the help of citizens from Eretria, Peisistratos established

50 Roehl 1882, no. 2; Jeffery 1990², 366 and 371 (no. 75).
51 Jeffery 1990², 72, n.5, 366–367 and 373 (no. 44, with bibliography at 43).
52 Jeffery 1990², 72. Peisistratid: Guarducci 1948.
53 Babelon 1906; Head et al. 1911², 377, cf. Hornblower 2013, 191.
54 Hdt. 1.61.3, also *AthPol* 15.2. See also Isaac 1986, 14.

a settlement in Macedonia.[55] According to the pseudo-Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*, "he first founded a settlement near the Thermaic Gulf called Rhaikelos, and from there he moved into the area around [Mt.] Pangaios, from where he got money and hired soldiers. …"[56] Rhaikelos appears to have served as an excellent base for Peisistratos to acquire the wealth needed to return from exile to Athens, thus, according to Herodotus, "rooting his tyranny in the great muscle and revenue derived both from Athens and from the area near the river Strymon".[57]

Neither *Athenaion Politeia* nor Herodotus specifies the source from which Peisistratos derived this wealth. In the classical period, the Athenians were actively involved in the timber trade with Macedonia and it seems probable that it was this commodity that attracted Peisistratos.[58] Furthermore, both accounts have him venturing east towards Thrace—the area around Mt. Pangaios and the river Strymon, where the Athenians had interests in the precious metal industry during the fifth century.[59] Indeed, it has been suggested that "Peisistratos became rich as a middle-man by doing business with Thracian miners."[60] And finally, it has been suggested that the Athenian and Eretrian soldier-colonists in Peisistratos' retinue represented a mercenary force-for-hire, available to intercede on behalf of local rulers ready to pay for their service.[61] Combining the trade in raw materials with his meddling in local politics seems to have landed Peisistratos a strong regional network that served as a powerbase from which he was able to launch his successful return from exile in 546, when he defeated his Athenian rivals at the battle of Pallene.

It is less clear how the Peisistratids maintained control of this foothold in the northern Aegean during the remainder of their tyranny. While we are less well-informed about their possession in Macedonia-Thrace than at

55 Hdt 1.64.1; *AthPol* 15.2. The Peisistratean venture in Macedonia and Thrace has been elaborately discussed by Lavelle 2005, 116–34. There is some confusion as to the precise location of the settlement, since the Herodotus passage refers to the river Strymon, which runs east of the Chalkidiki, while *AthPol* places it on the Thermaic Gulf. A general consensus places it in the northwestern Chalkidiki, on the promontory of Megalo Karabournou, about twenty-five kilometers southwest of Thessalonike on the eastern side of the Thermaic Gulf, Edson 1947, 88–91; Cole 1975, 42–43; Rhodes 1993, 207; Lavelle 2005, 331.

56 *AthPol* 15.2.

57 Hdt 1.64.1.

58 Thuc. 4.108.1.

59 Thuc. 4.105. Vlassopoulos 2013, 123.

60 Isaac 1986, 15.

61 Isaac 1986, 14–15; Baba 1990, but see Lavelle 2005, 121–122.

Sigeion—Herodotus declines to say whether or how the Peisistratids continued their control over the region—there is no reason to think that they voluntarily parted with such a formidable power-base. In fact, some circumstantial evidence suggests that they remained an important political factor down to the end of the Archaic period. This may be derived from another passage, which has the Macedonian king Amyntas offering Hippias—freshly ousted from Athens in 510—the settlement of Anthemous, about a day's march inlands of Rhaikelos, while the Thessalians offered him Iolkos.[62] While it is not clear why Hippias chose to decline both offers, choosing to retire to Sigeion instead, it is clear that the Peisitratids could still count on a strong network of allies in the northern Aegean by the end of the sixth century, which may suggest that they were still in possession of Rhaikelos.

Having firmly re-established his rule at Athens after the battle of Pallene in 546, Peisistratos set his eyes on the Ionian Aegean. A Naxian by the name of Lygdamis, who had been a supporter of Peisistratos when he was still endeavoring to return to Athens, provided an opportunity to expand his power to the southern Aegean. First, he conquered Naxos and established Lygdamis as its tyrant, using it as a place to keep the sons of influential Athenians as hostages.[63] With the largest of the Cycladic islands in his grasp, he then sought to extend his authority over the Cyclades and the Ionian cities to the east by assuming control over the sanctuary of Apollo on Delos. The manner in which he chose to do so is indicative of the integral role of religion in interstate politics, which is sometimes filtered out of the historical record. Herodotus states that Peisistratos "purified the island of Delos as a result of oracles", removing "all the dead buried in the ground that was within sight of the sanctuary and brought them to another part of Delos."[64] The sanctuary of Apollo on Delos was considered sacred to all Ionian communities in the Aegean. While Peisistratos' influence within the Ionian world was informal, his role in the purification of Delos was clearly designed to build his authority and represents a first Athenian claim to pre-eminence among the Ionian communities; this was reinforced by the claim that Athens was the metropolis from which all Ionians descended.[65] This claim would provide legitimacy to Athenian dominion in the fifth century and is closely related to the choice for Delos as spiritual core of the Delian League and as home to the communal treasury (478–454).

62 Hdt. 5.94.
63 Hdt. 1.64.2; cf. *AthPol* 15.3.
64 Hdt. 1.64.2; cf. Thuc. 3.104.
65 Hdt. 1.147.

The Philaidai

The tyranny of the Peisistratids may be expected to have curtailed the power of the other two factions, the Philaidai and the Alkmeonidai. At Athens, this must have been the case—although the fact that the Alkmeonid Kleisthenes and the Philaid Miltiades[66] appear to have served under the Peisistratids as archons—in 525/4 and 524/3 respectively—shows that the situation was more complex than is sometimes thought. On the other hand, the tyranny seems, if anything, to have strengthened the international ambitions of both the Philaidai and the Alkmeonidai. Rather than limiting the room to maneuver for the other factions, Peisistratos and his sons seem to have actively encouraged these factions to strike out into the Aegean on their own. No doubt this kept them out of harm's way at home, but at the cost of providing them with an alternative powerbase abroad, just as Peisistratos himself had set up a foreign powerbase from which he launched his return from exile.

Around the same time that Peisistratos captured Sigeion "at spear's point" (ca. 550), the Philaidai ventured out in the same direction, to the Thracian Chersonese on the other side of the Hellespont.[67] This thin, long peninsula upon which modern-day Gallipoli is located, was inhabited by a local tribe called the Dolonkoi.[68] According to Herodotus, when they were getting worsted by another tribe, the Apsinthians, "they sent their kings to Delphi to ask for an oracle pertaining to the war."[69] The oracle bade them to set up as their king the first to show them hospitality, which in the event turned out to be Miltiades, son of Kypselos (archon in 597–596), who was a prominent member of the Philaid *genos* and Olympic victor in 560. Miltiades accepted their request, desiring to leave Peisistratos' (second) tyranny in Athens—which, if trustworthy, would date the beginning of Philaid rule over the Thracian Chersonese to 556 or 555.[70] This date would also suggest that the conquest of the Chersonese preceded—and possibly inspired—that of Sigeion. Having built a wall at the isthmus of the peninsula, he battled both the Apsinthians and the inhabitants of Lampsakos before dying childless and leaving his possession to his (grand-?) nephew Stesigoros, son of Kimon.[71] Herodotus mentions

66 For the identity of this Miltiades, see Hammond 1956, 118.

67 Berve 1937, 7–26; Isaac 1986, 166–175.

68 For the region and its history, see Loukoupoulou 2004, 900–901. Athenian colonization, Figueira 2008, 431.

69 Hdt. 6.34. The history of Philaid rule is related in 6.34–41.

70 Hammond 1956, 113. For the date, see Isaac 1986, 163–164.

71 Hdt. 6.103.4. Hammond 1956, 113–14 constructs the Philaid family tree with three Miltiadai.

that Miltiades was revered as *oikistes* of the Athenian settlement in the Chersonese.[72]

Herodotus informs us that when this Stesigoros died in battle "the sons of Peisistratos sent Miltiades, the son of Kimon and brother of the recently deceased Stesigoros, in a trireme to the Chersonese to take control of its affairs" possibly using as a pretext the need to secure the grain-trade from the Black Sea.[73] It is remarkable that this younger Miltiades, who was to be the famous general at the battle of Marathon, would lend himself to the cause of the Peisistratids, since they were credited with having had a hand in his father's death.[74] No doubt, Peisistratos' sons were happy to have this Philaid scion removed from Athens and he may himself have found it safest to accede to their request. In any case, Miltiades re-established order in the Chersonese and appears to have ruled the territory as a personal fief—much in the way his Peisistratid rivals did on the opposite shores of the Hellespont—although Miltiades' rule appears to have been broken temporarily after a Skythian invasion drove him from the peninsula in 511/10.[75]

Athenian presence on the Chersonese is reinforced by numismatic evidence. It is certain that coins were struck on the Chersonese during the rule of the younger Miltiades (Figure. 3.3).[76] These coins are Attic tetradrachms with a head of Athena on the reverse in imitation of Athenian models, though the Lion on the obverse may be modelled on early coins from Miletos in possible support of the anti-Persian cause of that city. Some of these coins have the lettering XEP—in credible Attic script (to the degree that the letters lend itself to such a distinction)—inscribed in front of Athena. All are dated to the 490's. The fact that the Chersonese Athenians would strike their own coinage may be taken as evidence of their confidence as an independent community and certainly attests to their economic strength.[77] Conversely, the coinage shows a clear link with Athens in the head of Athena and the manner in which it was struck. This duality is reminiscent of the overlapping identity encountered on the Hippias coin, discussed earlier, in claiming adherence to the Athenian commonwealth as well as to the aristocratic faction in control of this specific dominion.

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72 Hdt. 6.38.

73 Hdt. 6.39.

74 Hdt. 6.103. The complicity of the Peisistratids has, however, been called into question as a case of "post-tyranny adjustment", Kallett-Marx 2013, 53, n. 65.

75 Hammond 1956, 118–19.

76 Hdt. 6.40. Seltman 1924, 141–144 and pl. XXIV; Head et al. 1911^2, 257–258; Jeffery 1990^2, 371, no. 34.

77 Isaac 1986, 167.

FIGURE 3.3 Coin from the Thracian Chersonese, ca. 595–594, with Milesian lion on the obverse and the head of Athena on the reverse
PHOTO COURTESY OF CLASSICAL NUMISMATICS GROUP HTTPS://WWW.CNGCOINS.COM/ARTICLE.ASPX?ARTICLEID=27

Philaid interests in the northern Aegean were not confined to the Thracian Chersonese alone. Herodotus and other sources attest that Miltiades the Younger conquered Lemnos, one of the Thracian Sporades (fig. 3.5), an event that has been dated as broadly as 515–495, although a more precise—and perhaps more credible—date of 496–495 has been proposed by Evans.[78] The neighboring island of Imbros apparently befell the same fate, though much less is known about the circumstances of its conquest.[79] The ethnicity of the previous inhabitants of Lemnos is disputed by the ancient sources. According to Nepos they were Carians, while Herodotus calls them Pelasgians, a generic term used in antiquity to denote the pre-Hellenic population of Greece.[80] According to the latter, the Pelasgians harbored an age-old and deep-rooted enmity with the Athenians because they had expelled them from Attica, causing them to retire to Lemnos. The label "Pelasgian" is likely to be a late

78 Hdt. 6.136 and 6.140; Nep., *Milt.* 1–3; Diod. 10.19.6. See Berve 1937, 44–57; Evans 1963, 168 for a treatment of the conquest of Lemnos by Miltiades with a summary of the various datings, favoring for himself the lower date. Ficuciello 2013, 198 favors a date between 499-494/3. Cf. Figueira 2008, 431–432.

79 When Darius' fleet advanced in 495, Miltiades fled with five of his ships to Imbros, losing one with his son in command, Hdt. 6.41. Athenian troops from Imbros are mentioned several times in Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War, Thuc. 3.5.1; 4.28.4; 5.8.2; 7.57.2. See also Graham 1982, 122. Imbros as an apanage of Philaid Chersonese, Figueira 2008, 431.

80 Nep., *Milt.* 2.5; Hdt. 6.136–139.

FIGURE 3.4 Athenian casualty list from Lemnos, ca. 495
SOURCE: BERTI ET AL. 2017, 215, FIG. 8

invention and may well have been attached to the Lemnians at the time of the Athenian take-over by Miltiades, since it tied them to the Athenians' own mythological-historical narrative while at the same time pinning the blame of the conflict on the Lemnians.[81]

This reading is supported by the fact that a third author, Diodorus Siculus, calls the inhabitants "Tyrrhenians".[82] In modern linguistics, this ethnonym is applied to an eastern group of isoglot peoples in the northeastern Aegean, who were most likely related to a western group, better known as the Etruscans, who may have split off at some point during the Early Iron Age.[83] The first Attic inscriptions from Lemnos, on the other hand, all date from 500 onward, and include a boundary stone from an Artemis sanctuary as well as a well-known casualty list (Figure. 3.4), which is generally dated to the first years of the fifth century.[84] Epigraphic evidence thus supports a date for the Lemnian and Imbrian acquisitions in the early years of the fifth century.

The listing of the fallen according to their Kleisthenic tribal allegiance is noteworthy, as is the distinct possibility that these men lost their lives during Miltiades' conquest. The Athenian tribal names show that these men identified themselves as Athenians first and foremost, suggesting that the acquisition of the island in the early years of the democracy may have been more of a polis affair than the earlier Hellespontine acquisitions, which seem to have been tied more closely to their individual aristocratic rulers. Perhaps the

81 For a similar argument, cf. Kallett-Marx 2013, 53–54.

82 Diod. 10.19.6.

83 Beekes 2003. That the language of the Lemnian "Tyrrhenians" was related to Etruscan is today disputed by few and borne out by the lettering on the famous "Lemnos Stele", which dates to the late sixth century, Cousin and Durrbach 1886. Cf. Ficuciello 2013, 192–193.

84 *IG* I^3 1477; Jeffery 1990^2, 299–300 and 307, nos. 58 and 59.

FIGURE 3.5 Map of the Aegean. Peisistratid holdings indicated in bold. Philaid holdings indicated in italics

ethnic cleansing, alluded to by Herodotus,[85] that took place after the conquest, opened the way for Lemnos to become a true Athenian settlement away from home, a *klerouchia*, which was tied more closely to the polis in an administrative sense.[86] It also ties in with the fact that the Athenians are said to have

85 Hdt. 6.140.

86 For the Lemnian *klerouchia*, cf. Ficuciello 2013, 199; Figueira 2008, 434.

honored Miltiades for delivering Lemnos into their possession.[87] Lemnos was unique among Athens' northern possessions in that it remained in Athenian hands throughout much of Antiquity, as is attested by the issue of coins struck on the island with the head of Athena.[88]

We thus notice a remarkable transformation taking place in the years before Marathon, at a time when the Persian threat already loomed large. As Hippias remained in exile at Sigeion, we observe Miltiades now operating under the guise of the Athenian polis, but in effect still pursuing the same Philaid territorial aims as under the tyranny. Personal interests and those of the demos clearly went hand in hand at this time, but also in the years immediately following the Persian invasion of Greece. In the 470's Miltiades' son conquered Skyros, wiping out its original inhabitants and settling the island with Athenian *klerouchoi*, thus following a pattern set by his father two decades earlier with Lemnos and Imbros.[89] At the same time, the Athenians settled Amphipolis near the estuary of the Strymon in Thrace in an apparent move into what had been a Peisistratid area of influence.[90] It is interesting to note that Skyros lies on the route from Athens to the Propontic Aegean, marking the place where ships would have to abandon the relative safety of the mainland's coast for a journey across the Aegean toward, indeed, Lemnos, Imbros and the Thracian Chersonese.[91] Thus, Kimon completed what appears to have been a longstanding Philaid project of controlling and profiting from the entire Aegean corn-route.[92]

Following the example of the Peisistratids, the Philaidai, in the person of Miltiades, sought to expand their influence to the Cyclades in an attempt, it would seem, to increase Athenian standing within the Ionian world. In 489, a year after the battle of Marathon, with his personal prestige at its zenith, Miltiades convinced the Athenians to give him 70 galleys, with which he proposed to conquer an undisclosed country, bringing them bountiful spoils.[93] Willing to obey their successful general, the Athenians granted Miltiades his request. The secret object of his plan, however, the Cycladic island of Paros, proved less amenable to conquest than Miltiades had promised.[94] Having sustained a lethal

87 Hdt. 6.136.
88 Head et al. 1911², 261–263.
89 Thuc. 1.98.2. Podlecki 1971.
90 Thuc. 1.100.3; 4.102.2; Isaac 1986, 19–21.
91 Cf. Kallett-Marx 2013, 51; Davies 1978, 77.
92 Cf. Kallett-Marx 2013, 53, with regard to Thrace: "Cimon accomplished what his father had intended but failed to do".
93 Hdt. 6.132.
94 Hdt. 6.133–135. Cf. Berve 1937, 92–101. Figueira 2008, 434.

wound to his leg, he was forced to return home, where he was fined a sum of 50 talents—eventually paid by his son Kimon—before succumbing to the effects of gangrene.[95] Herodotus ascribes the motive to a personal grudge against a Parian called Lysagoras son of Tisias.[96] It would, however, have been apparent from the outset that a strike against the second largest Cycladic island would bring the Athenians a considerable strategic advantage in the southern Aegean[97] and, like Peisistratos' activities on Naxos and Delos, shows that Athenian aspirations of dominion over the whole of the Aegean preceded the formation of the Delian League. Even in its failure, the attempt at gaining control of Paros reinforces the notion, moreover, that the Philaids were successful in aligning the objectives of the democratic polis with their own, something Miltiades had already shown on Lemnos and his son was about to in Thrace and on Skyros.[98]

The Alkmeonids

Much less is known about the foreign exploits of the third Athenian faction, the Alkmeonids.[99] It is nevertheless instructive to attempt to weave what little we know into the narrative as outlined for the other factions. From what we do know, the Alkmeonids did not engage in the acquisition of foreign territorial possessions, perhaps because they were more solidly entrenched in Athens during much of the sixth century.[100] The Alkmeonids were involved in the suppression of Kylon's attempt at a *coup d'etat* in 632, killing his followers after they had taken refuge at the sanctuary of Athena on the Acropolis.[101] This resulted in a period of exile which lasted until they were allowed back in the city under the archonship of Solon in 594.[102] According to several sources, the Alkmeonids amassed great wealth during their period in exile.[103] While these sources do not state how this wealth was accumulated—it was apparently

95 Hdt. 6.136.
96 Hdt. 6.133.1.
97 Cf. Contantakopoulou 2007.
98 Kimon in Thrace: Hdt. 7.107; Thuc. 1.98.1; Plut., *Cim.* 7–8.2; Isaac 1986, 19–21; on Skyros: Thuc. 1.98.2.
99 Cf. Camp 1994.
100 They were, by all means a very large faction. According to Herodotus (5.72.1) they numbered seven hundred households before Cleomenes drove them out of Attica (see also *Ath.Pol.* 20.3).
101 Hdt. 5.71; Thuc 1.126. Plut., *Sol.* 12.
102 Plut., *Sol.* 11.2.
103 Hdt. 6.125.5; Isok. 16.25; Pind. *Pyth.* 7.13 and schol. ad loc. Cf. Lavelle 2005, 79.

enough for Alkmaion to field a winning chariot team at Olympia in 592, a clear testament of his impressive personal wealth—we detect here a pattern similar to the foreign enterprises of the Peisistratids and Philaidai during their time in exile. Exclusion from a share in Athenian politics apparently did not necessarily mean a deprecation of their international influence and standing.

Soon after their return, Alkmaion scored a resounding international success by marrying his son Megakles to Agarista, daughter of the powerful tyrant of Sikyon.[104] After this, the record is more silent about the international exploits of the Almeonidai, perhaps because at the time they were too deeply involved in the politics of Athens itself. Indeed, they appear to have played a rather duplicitous role throughout the tyranny and were probably early backers of Peisistratos' bid for power.[105] This accords well with the fact that Kleisthenes, Megakles's son, was archon at Athens in 525/4, when Hippias was tyrant. Nevertheless, there appears to have been a falling out between the two factions and the Alkmeonidai are said to have gone into exile. Once out of Athens, they bribed the Delphic oracle by rebuilding the temple of Apollo in order to lure the Spartans into "liberating" Athens from the Peisistratids in 510.[106] Perhaps the Alkmeonidai lacked such foreign territorial holdings as their competitors possessed because they were too deeply entrenched in Athens for most of the sixth century. And indeed, it has been suggested that their final exile was played-up *post factum* to cover up their continuing support of the tyranny.[107] But no matter how we choose to valuate this episode, their involvement in the rebuilding of the temple of the Pythia remains beyond doubt and shows that they ranked not just among the most prominent families in Athens, but indeed in all of Greece.

Factionalism and the Greco-Persian Conflict

Both the Philaids and the Peisistratids ruled their possessions as personal fiefs. Nevertheless, the northern inhabitants of the settlements retained a strong

104 Hdt. 6.126–131.

105 Lavelle 2005, 87–89. Jeffery 1976, 78 argued for an Alkmeonid exile during Peisistratus' earlier tyranny, based on a dedication set up by Alkmeonides at the sanctary of Apollo at Ptoion (CEG 302/IG I^3 1469), but it is not at all evident that the inscription supports such a conclusion, cf. Schachter 2016, 154–160.

106 Hdt. 5.62–63. This passage should be treated with some caution as it puts the Alkmeonidai "on the right side of history" just before the end of the tyranny. As Lavelle 2005, 87–89 argues, Herodotus' account of the family under the tyranny shows evidence of being biased, perhaps because the Alkmeonidai themselves were his primary informants.

107 Lavelle 2005, 87–89, see previous note.

Athenian identity, as is evidenced by the "Athenian" owl and head of Athena impressed on them. Ties with the metropolis were common in Greek colonies throughout the Mediterranean, but seem especially strong in Sigeion and on the Thracian Chersonese. This duality brings to mind the "concessions" of foreign territories given out by the Genoese government to leading families in order to secure strategic aims abroad.[108] This practice, incidentally, planted the seeds for potential conflict with the mother city as local allegiance was predicated on the factional leaders in control of these possessions, a conflict of interests also at play in Sigeion during Hippias' rule in exile. The problematic double allegiance to both the mother city and to local aristocratic rule became especially apparent during the first years of the democracy, when the Philaids sought to play the game both abroad and at home. When Miltiades returned to Athens in flight before the Persian advance to the Chersonese, he was (unsuccessfully) tried for his tyrannical rule there.[109] Some years earlier, Miltiades seems to have secured Athenian consent for his conquest of Lemnos, "delivering it to the Athenians," which confirms the ambivalent relationship between the young democracy and its champions abroad.[110] Kimon's exploits in the northern Aegean during the 470's can at once be seen as a continuation of the policy of his father, but it also brings to light the unease it inspired at home, his actions winning him acclaim as well as litigation for allegedly accepting bribes from the Macedonian king.[111]

As Miltiades' trial at Athens shows, the ambivalence of this relationship did not fully emerge until the Persian advance brought to light the inherent vulnerability of the overseas possessions. Of the two possible responses, resistance or submission, the 'renegade' Hippias, who was firmly entrenched in Sigeion, chose the latter, calculating that the Persians would be able to restore him to power in Athens. While this may well have played into his plans, it fails to factor in the basic premise of the Ionic revolt, aversion of the tyrants' rule, and the Persian reaction, which was to protect the tyrants. Hippias' choice, it appears, was made for him.

Athens' role in burning the Persian capital of Asia Minor, Sardis, in 498, placed it firmly in the camp of the rebels,[112] a policy that has a strong Alkmeonid flavor to it. With the Peisistratid Hippias and the Philaid Miltiades out of the way, democratic rule at Athens was effectively dominated by the

108 See the contribution by Kirk in this volume.

109 Hdt. 6.104. For Miltiades' flight from the Persian advance, see Berve 1937, 92.

110 Hdt. 6.136.

111 Plut., *Cim.* 14.2–3. See also Isaac 1986, 19–21.

112 Hdt. 5.99.

Alkmeonids and it is easy to understand why the party of Kleisthenes, founder of the democratic constitution in 508/7, favored the Ionian cause, directed as it was against its Persian-backed tyrants. Having played an important role in the removal of tyranny from Athens, the Alkmeonids now found natural allies in the Ionian reformist camp.

In this light, the Athenian involvement in the Greco-Persian conflict is not merely a matter of democracy opposing tyranny, but also of rivalling faction leaders choosing sides based on their primary interests. This naturally pitted Alkmeonids against Peisistratids. The position of the Philaid party was more ambivalent, however. As tyrant of the Chersonese, Miltiades faced a similar choice as his rival on the opposite shore of the Hellespont and may have frowned upon the anti-tyrannical element within the rebel cause. But unlike Hippias, Miltiades remained a part of the Athenian franchise and, as such, had the option to return home. He apparently wavered for a long time, waiting until the very last moment before laying out his cards and fleeing to Athens.[113] Sailing from the Chersonese, he was overtaken by the Persian fleet, and, losing his son to Persian captivity, only barely managed to make his own escape.[114]

That Miltiades chose to flee may be taken as a powerful testament to the appeal the Athenian franchise held from him, a franchise he would have to give up if he were to side with the Persians. His choice should not, however, be taken as a wholehearted yea to the democratic cause of his mother-city. And indeed, the fact that he was tried for tyranny upon his arrival there, shows how deeply he was mistrusted by some in the democratic party and suggests suspicion of collusion with the "other" tyrants in the opposing camp.[115] Miltiades, in the end, may well have been swayed by a deeply-felt animosity towards the Peisistratids, which dated at least to Peisistratos' first tyranny and the choice of the elder Miltiades to try his fortunes on the Thracian Chersonese. The rivalry implicit in that choice presumably deepened to enmity with the hand the Peisistratids were supposed to have had in the murder of Miltiades' father. With the fate of Hippias firmly tied to the Persian cause, Miltiades may well have been rooting secretly for the Ionians in the hope of effectuating his rival's

113 But see Isaac 1986, 175, who argues that Miltiades had pursued an anti-Persian policy all along. This is based on Miltiades' supposed two-faced approach during Darius' Skythian campaign in 513/2, Hdt. 4.136–137.

114 Hdt. 6.41.

115 In 513/2, during his Skythian campaign, Darius had charged Miltiades with guarding a bridge across the Danube, although he seems to have played both sides of the fence here, Hdt. 4.136–7 and Isaac 1986, 173–174.

destruction. It would explain the rebels' apparent free access to the Propontis[116] and would tie in well with the sentiment expressed on the Chersonese coins that were struck in the 490's, bearing the head of Athena on one side and the Milesian lion on the other (Figure. 3.3), which appears to imply support for the anti-Persian cause of that city.

Concluding Remarks: the Roots of Empire

Athenian overseas ambitions in the Archaic period were limited in scope, a far cry yet from the Classical Empire. They also lacked the support of an overwhelmingly dominant navy. For much of the earlier period, Athens could not compete with contemporary naval powers like Corinth, Samos or even neighboring Aegina. Only by the end of the sixth century did Athenian naval force begin to count, as it entered into an arms race at sea with Aegina. From the late seventh century onwards, however, Athenians began to take an active interest in the northern Aegean seaboards, setting up strongholds in Macedonia, Thrace and on either side of the entrance to the Hellespont and conquering the strategically important islands of Lemnos and Imbros. This shows that influence abroad was not merely a question of naval power alone, but relied on an individual kind of entrepreneurship that suggests a stunning lack of coordinated state policy.[117] As the case of Kimon shows, foreign policy remained in the hands of strong aristocratic leaders even in the early democracy.

Peisistratos, in particular, has been credited with taking "the first steps on the path which led Athens to empire", on account of his aggressive overseas exploits.[118] But Peisistratos could not rely on a naval force strong enough to consistently enforce Athenian dominion over a range of Greek poleis. Naxos remained an exception. More importantly, Peisistratos' foreign ventures should

116 Hdt. 6.140, see Seltman 1924, 142.

117 Figueira 1991, 132–142 called Archaic Athenian colonization 'patronal', stressing the individual/familial nature of these initiatives, cf. also Figueira 2008, 429–434. Recently, Kallett-Marx 2013, 53 has argued for a more "collective" or "imperial" nature, pointing to a passage in Herodotus (6.140), discussed above, which has Miltiades acting on behalf of the Athenians in the conquest of Lemnos. As the discussion here makes clear, Lemnos stands out from the other Athenian possessions in the northern Aegean: Herodotus specifically refers to Peisistratid rule at Sigeion and Philaid hegemony in the Thracian Chersonese as tyrannical (see discussion above); Lemnos, on the other hand, was an Athenian *klerouchia*, established very late in the Archaic period and was acquired for the Athenian democracy by Miltiades.

118 Bury 1900, 197; cf. Beloch 1912^2, 387; Bloedow 1975, 20–23.

be seen in light of other Athenian—and indeed Greek—aristocratic leaders actively promoting their interests abroad. The exploits of the Athenian faction leaders were made possible through a combination of alliances with other Greek poleis and aristocrats—as in the case of the Peisistratid bid for power in Macedonia/Thrace—as well as with local populations—such as the Philaid connection with the Dolonkoi. If anything, these exploits show a willingness on the part of these leaders to engage their foes, Greek or native, when- and wherever necessary *on land*.

The core strategic aims of the Classical Empire were, however, deeply rooted in the Archaic period. First, the assumption of a leading role among the Ionian states of the Southern Aegean appears to have been defined—albeit in an embryonic form—as early as Peisistratos' tyranny. So was an important method of accomplishing that aim: the purification of the sanctuary of Delos, an act designed to establish Athenian control over the Cyclades, assert authority over the Ionians of the Cyclades and Asia Minor, and reinforce the Athenian claim as the metropolis from which all Ionians descended. The same process was repeated, more thoroughly, in the fifth century.[119] The choice for Delos as the nominal headquarters of the Delian League in the fifth century was based on a stratagem that had been conceived a century before. A similar case of meddling in international affairs through direct intervention at a supra-regional sanctuary is provided by the Alkmeonid involvement in the rebuilding of the temple of the Pythia. With regard to Delphi, too, Athenian policy remained consistent.[120]

A second crucial strategic interest of the Classical Empire, securing the "corn-route" through the northern Aegean likewise had its roots deep in the Archaic period.[121] During that time, Athenian aims in the region were effectuated through a variety of means, ranging from the creation of trade *entrepots*, such as at Rhaikelos in Macedonia, to the strategic control of anchorage posts on either side of the Hellespont and the establishment of a *klerouchia* on Lemnos. In the case of the Hellespontine settlements, economic benefits were derived not so much from direct trade with the Euxine hinterland—which seems to have been dominated by the Milesians and Megarians—or from a potential blockade of the Propontic straits. Rather, the Athenian settlement at Sigeion afforded outside traders with a last port of call before entering the treacherous currents. Once inside the straits the Philaid controlled settlements on the southern shores of the Chersonese (Elaios, Madytos, Sestos, Kallipolis

119 Thuc. 3.104.

120 Especially evident during the second Sacred War, Thuc. 1.112; Plut., *Vit. Per.*, 21.

121 Cf. Kallett-Marx 2013, 52.

and Paktya) provided reliable anchorages where traders could take in food and water. But most importantly, the firm grasp on the Hellespont secured the free flow of vital grain imports that might otherwise be redirected elsewhere—a familiar concern in the Classical Empire.[122]

But grain was not all there was to be had in the northern Aegean. In the Classical period, Athens relied heavily on the empire to provide its citizens with a range and quantity of commodities not found at home—leading Pericles to remark that to an Athenian "the fruits of other countries are as familiar a luxury as those of his own."[123] While the commercial interests of the Athenian Empire extended far beyond the northern Aegean and the (pro-)Pontic region, it is clear that trade with these areas was vital to the Athenian economy throughout much of the fifth and fourth centuries. The Pontic region supplied the city with foodstuffs (grain, wine, fish), slaves and mineral resources (gold, copper, iron, zinc, lead); Macedonia was vital for supplying the timber needed for the maintenance of the fleet; and Thrace offered more mineral riches (gold, silver) and slaves. These same commodities were already available to the Athenians in the Archaic period as a result of their overseas possessions. What sets Athenian strategic aims in the Archaic period apart from the those prevalent in the Classical era is thus not so much the definition of the aims themselves as the scope within which they were pursued.

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122 Cf. Dem. 18.241, 18.301, 19.180. Also, De Ste. Croix 1972, 46–49.

123 Thuc. 2.38.2 (transl. Strassler 1996).

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CHAPTER 4

Contested Hegemonies: Thebes, Athens and Persia in the Aegean of the 360s

Roy van Wijk

Central to this article is an anomaly of the so-called Theban Hegemony (371–362 BCE): the Theban attempt to establish naval supremacy in the Aegean in the mid-360s at the expense of the Second Athenian League, which was the dominant power in this arena at that time.[1] Theban (or Boiotian) naval ambitions have often been regarded as a misguided folly that left no lasting imprint on Aegean history. They would never have been able to compete with the Athenians at their own game, maritime dominance in the Aegean Sea.[2]

There is however good reason to revise this view. When we consider Boiotia as the only country in Greece with access to three seas and owning some excellent harbours, Theban investments in maritime power seem far less outlandish.[3] Investigating this episode can lead to new insights in the nature of the Theban Hegemony, as it allows us to retrace the creation of a naval network, *viz*., the Theban one, that operated in the same geographical and institutional confines as the pre-existing Second Athenian League. How could the Thebans navigate through the Aegean waters to establish an elaborate power network of their own, under the watchful eyes of the Athenians? What happened when these two projects overlapped in the Aegean? What role did the Persian king play in playing the dominant naval powers in the Aegean out against each

1 I would like to thank the Swiss National Science Foundation for providing the necessary support to present an earlier draft of this article at the Utrecht Conference 'Empires of the Sea: A Colloquium on Maritime Power Networks in Global History'. I am grateful to Fabienne Marchand and Albert Schachter for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2 The most negative account is Stylianou 1998, 495; also, Cawkwell 1972. Buckler 1980, 160–175 asserts this is the only time the Boiotians substantially expanded their navy; see however Buck 1994 23; Thuc. 8.3.2, 5.2 and 106.3.

3 Strabo 9.2.2. The syntax of this fragment is unclear and obstructs a conclusive reading of its meaning. Buckler 2008a, 180 asserts from this passage that Boiotia did not possess excellent natural harbours, although in 313 a Macedonian admiral was able to put in at Aulis with at least 160 warships (Diod. 19.77.4). Again in 304 Demetrius Poliorcetes landed a huge fleet at Aulis (Diod. 20.100.5; 20.82.4). Other harbours included Kreusis and Siphai on the Corinthian Gulf, and Anthedon and Skroponeri on the Euboian Gulf, see also the work by Bonnier 2014 on the interconnectedness of the Boiotian Corinthian Gulf harbours.

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other? And lastly, how can this episode inform us about the struggle of a maritime force wanting to expand at the expense of an enemy whose power revolves around the control of larger landmasses, in this case the Athenians and their maritime strength against the Persian Empire?[4]

The Second Athenian League: a Historical Introduction

A brief historical introduction is necessary to understand the developments that triggered the establishment of the Second Athenian League and its later interactions with Thebes (Figure. 4.1). Contemporary sources such as Xenophon are silent on the subject of the League but our knowledge has been complemented by the recovery of the Stele of Aristoteles.[5] The stele has allowed us to date the inauguration of the League in 378/7. Amongst its earliest members are the Thebans, the Chians and the Byzantines.

Besides naming its participants, the text records the regulations for the political interaction and the control over mutual affairs. For instance, it states that the Athenians could only pursue goals or policies with the explicit consent of a majority of the allies when the League's finances were involved. The *synedroi*, a council of allies that regularly convened in Athens for deliberations, had to approve other measures as well. Importantly, all the members regulated the finances. Their contributions towards the maintenance of the Athenian fleet could only be collected after a democratic vote with a majority's consent. The Athenians were to serve as guardians of the sea and protect all of the allies from piracy and hostile forces. These measures were incorporated to prevent a repeat of the fifth-century Athenian empire. Within this empire, the Athenians took recourse to unwarranted abuse and suppression of their allies (and non-members) to maximise their benefit from the pact.[6] Nonetheless, the allies

4 It is necessary however to clarify several matters before diving into the matter. Readers may notice that I frequently use 'Boiotians' and 'Thebans' interchangeably. Throughout most of Boiotia's history it is indeed impossible to use both terms as denoting the same area of leadership. In this period though, the Thebans operated over Boiotian matters in such a dominant fashion, one would be hard-pressed *not* to regard Theban policy as Boiotian policy, especially after the Battle of Leuktra (371).

5 Nowadays called the Prospectus for the Second Athenian League. For critical editions of the inscription, cf. IG II2 43. Accame 1941; 48–69; Cargill 1981; Rhodes and Osborne no. 22. Diodoros has left us with an account of the League's foundation, but the inscription is the more trustworthy of sources in this case. On the League see Accame 1941; Cawkwell 1981; Dreher 1995; Jansen 2007, 147–174.

6 E.g. Meiggs 1972; Low 2009. For new perspectives, cf. Ma, Parker, and Papazarkadas 2009.

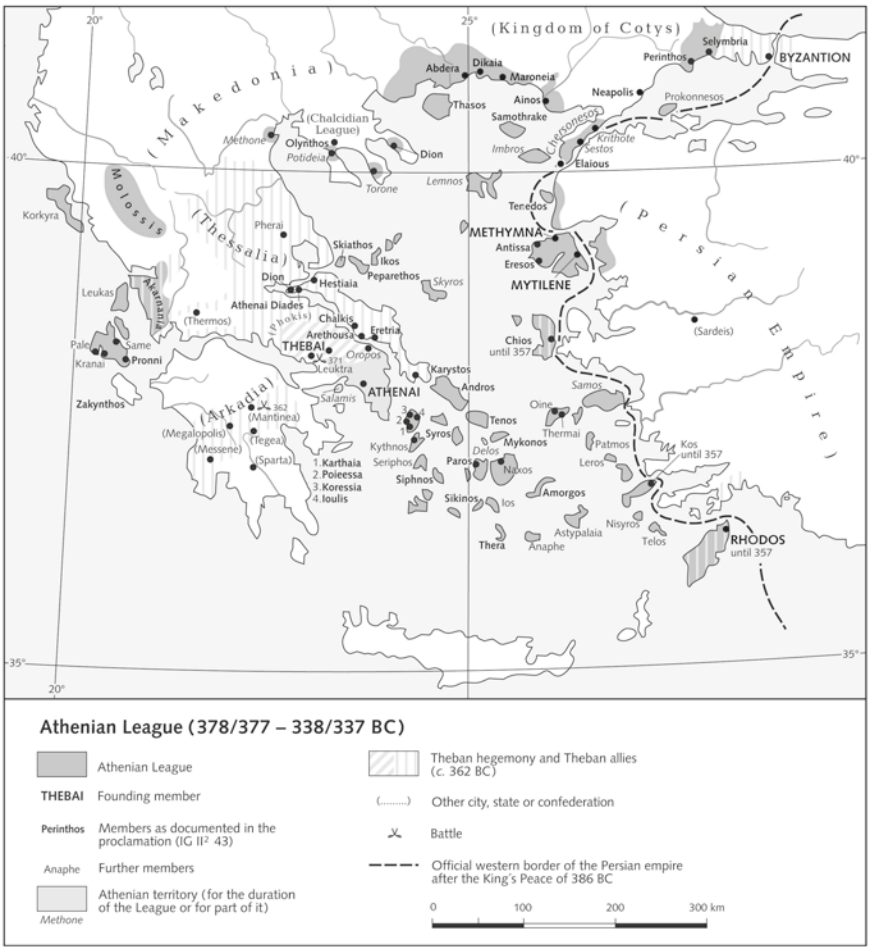

FIGURE 4.1 The Athenian League
FROM P. RHODES ED., *BRILL'S NEUE PAULY* ONLINE, 2006

chose their former suppressors as the leaders of this new League to overtake the contemporary Spartan domination of the Aegean. What had convinced the Aegean poleis to voluntarily join an Athenian-led alliance after their previous negative experience?

Spartan behaviour towards the Aegean poleis facilitated this change in attitude. Their help in emancipating the members of the Athenian empire in the fifth century had generated a substantial amount of goodwill among the majority of Aegean poleis. However, the Spartans became increasingly abusive of their power to pursue their own gains, rather than common ones, prompting their Aegean allies to look elsewhere. This offered the Athenians

the possibility to reclaim their leading role in naval affairs. It culminated in the Battle of Naxos (376), where an allied fleet defeated the Spartan fleet. Following their magnificent victory, the Athenians re-asserted themselves as the leading naval power. The Spartans, on the other hand, pursued an end to the hostilities, which led to the Peace of 375 in which they were proclaimed leaders of landed affairs, with their adversaries claiming a similar role as the naval hegemon.[7] The early 370s thus saw the revival of Athenian naval supremacy in the Aegean, spurred on by the establishment of the League and the support of its members, Thebes included.[8] In the years that followed, however, the concord between Athens and its strongest ally Thebes corroded. The first palpable sign was the Thebans' refusal to contribute financially to the expansion of the Athenian navy shortly before the Battle of Naxos. A lack of funds for this project put a serious strain on Athenian finances and as a result they agreed to the Spartan peace as it offered them respite and to bolster their treasury.[9] Theban-Athenian relations were further strained in subsequent years, as the Thebans gradually strengthened their hold over Boiotia. This is best reflected in their behaviour towards Thespiai and Plataia. These internecine tensions culminated in the destruction of both towns by Thebes in 373 and 371 respectively, thereby ridding itself of two major obstructions for domination of regional affairs.[10] It was the watershed in their relations. The Athenians were infuriated, and tensions rose. For the time being, however, no bellicose behaviour seemed imminent as the Spartans, Athenians and Thebans attended a peace conference in 371 to settle their disputes. Despite these dovish intentions, a semantic issue proved to be the catalyst for the breakdown in negotiations. The Spartans demanded Theban acquiescence to the treaty on behalf of themselves, rather than on behalf of all the Boiotians. The Theban ambassadors refused this claim, as it entailed a rejection of Theban domination over Boiotia. With it, all hope for a treaty was killed. It turned

7 Nep., *Timoth.* 2.2; Diod. 15.38.4.

8 As can be derived from their special place in the Prospectus of the League, cf. Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 22, l.73–75, as well as l.24–25, where the Thebans and Chians are mentioned as the first allies, after which later alliances will be modelled.

9 Xen., *Hell.* 6.2.1; However, Dreher 1995, 84–6 argues the Thebans had been exempt from financial contributions to the League.

10 Thespiai: Xen., *Hell.* 5.4.46, Diod. 15.46.6. Plataia: Isoc., 14; Paus. 9.1.8; Xen., *Hell.* 6.3.1. Cf. Roesch 1965, 45; Buck 1994, 104–5; Beck 2000. Yet see the new illuminating piece on Thespiai by Anthony Snodgrass that offers convincing archaeological evidence to counter the exaggerations in the account of the orators concerning the destruction of the town: Snodgrass 2017. The same does not hold for Plataia.

out to be a great turning point in Greek history. Aggrieved at the refusal, the Spartans marched their armies to meet the Boiotians, led by the great Theban general Epameinondas. Contrary to their expectations, the Spartans suffered a humiliating defeat on the fields of Leuktra (371), the battle that inaugurated the period known as the Theban hegemony.[11] It also had consequences for the Athenian League, as the Euboian poleis, strategically vital to Athens, left the alliance. The Thebans had quickly asserted themselves as the dominant power in Greece and ushered in a period of Boiotian dominance. In the ensuing decade the Thebans gradually further destabilised the Spartan powerbase in the Peloponnese, and intervened in the northern regions Macedonia and Thessaly when circumstance demanded it, to consolidate their interests.[12] A new power had arisen in Greece.

The King's Peace of 365 BCE

The disintegration of Sparta's ancient foothold in the Peloponnese left Sparta severely weakened, leaving Athens and Thebes as the strongest remaining powers in mainland Greece. Thebes' only remaining obstacle in the way of supremacy lay some sixty kilometres southwards and its strength lay in its navy. Aspiring to solve this issue, the Thebans thought it prudent to send an embassy to Susa in 367 to obtain the support of the Persian King Artaxerxes II for their endeavours. They sent one of their foremost leaders, Pelopidas, to reiterate their longstanding good relationship. Concrete aims of the embassy included obtaining the support of Artaxerxes II for further disbandment of Spartan power in the Peloponnese by the liberation of Messene and to constrain Athenian naval power by forcing them 'to draw up their ships on land'.[13] The King's growing weariness of increased Athenian maritime presence in the Aegean eased his consent to these demands. He proclaimed a common peace for all the Greek poleis to adhere to with its conclusion to take place in Thebes. This diplomatic manoeuvre to curtail the Athenians and increase Thebes' profile backfired as

11 Xen., *Hell.* 6.3.19; Plut., *Ages.* 28. For the Theban hegemony, Buckler 1980.

12 Hornblower 2011[4], 256–260. On the disintegration of the Peloponnese, see Funke and Luraghi 2009.

13 Xen., *Hell.* 7.1.36; καὶ Ἀθηναίους ἀνέλκειν τὰς ναῦς. Cf. Nep., *Pel.* 4.3; Diod. 15.81.3; Plut., *Pel.* 30; Plut., *Artax.* 22, 8.1–2; Paus. 6.1.3; 3.9.17.5. For a discussion of all the sources regarding this embassy see Bearzot 2011.

the majority of Greek poleis refused to conform to this proposal.[14] Obtaining imperial support was fruitless for the Boiotians as their proclamation of power met with resistance from other poleis. It forced them to find other means.

The implementation of the policy-shift occurred a year later (366). Strengthened by the King's support, the Boiotians decided to rely on actions rather than words. The first product of their renewed vigour was the capture of the territory of Oropos, frequently disputed by Athens and Thebes.[15] Although the Athenians believed there was a case to be made for reclaiming the area, they were dismayed by the reticent response from their allies.[16] Taking notice of the reluctant response by the League members, the Thebans saw chances for further expansion at the expense of their southern neighbour. Epameinondas pushed for recognition of the Boiotian claim as the enforcers of the King's Peace in 365. Their claim, however, did not reverberate with the other Greek states who simply did not acknowledge it.[17] They were unable to weaken the Athenian navy in this way. Therefore, Epameinondas took matters into his own hands in 364 and boldly proclaimed at the Boiotian assembly that hegemony on land was no longer sufficient for their aims and convinced them of the need to create a complete hegemony by forming a thalassocracy of their own. This would erode Athenian power as it was their nautical superiority that stood in the way of Theban domination.[18] Enticed by the statesman's speech, the assembly voted to support the scheme. In that same year, 364, Epameinondas set out with his fleet.[19] Which were the steps taken by the Boiotians to compete with the Athenian League?

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14 Xen., Hell. 7.1.38-40; πρὸς βασιλέα. For more on the common peace of the Persian King in general, see Jehne 1994 and 84–86 for the peace of 366/5.

15 Xen., *Hell.* 7.4.1. The Boiotians also invaded Achaia in an attempt to further splinter the Spartan alliance in the Peloponnese. It was in this year that Thebes assented to a peace with Corinth and several North Eastern Peloponnesian states, but not with Sparta and Athens, Jehne 1994, 87.

16 Xen., *Hell.* 4.1.2; Diod. 15.76.1. In order to resolve the issue, the Persian King supported the Athenians' claim to Amphipolis in the Northern Aegean circa one year later, in exchange for Theban control over the Oropia. For more on the dating of this claim, see Heskel 1997, 101–108; Hornblower 2011[4], 260.

17 Xen., *Hell.* 7.1.39-40, 4.6–11.

18 Diod. 15.8.4. The Athenian orator Aeschines would later claim Epameinondas had planned to transfer the gateway to the Athenian Acropolis, the Propylaia, to the Theban acropolis, the Kadmeia: Aes. 2.105. Though Aeschines is clearly exaggerating, it does help to illustrate the point. Aes. 2.105.

19 For the date of the voyage, see Buckler 1980, 258–9. He asserts that the decision to build the ships must have been undertaken several years before, in 366: Buckler 1980, 161–169. However, a chronological certainty is unattainable (cf. Mackil 2008, 181) and I am

Creating a Naval Network: the Thebans and the Aegean in the 360s

The initial phase of the plan consisted of creating the proper infrastructure to construct and maintain a navy consisting of a hundred triremes to oppose the Athenian naval presence.[20] For such a comprehensive operation resources were needed, ranging from the raw materials for the ships to considerable amounts of money for the payment of additional crews and specialised craftsmen for its construction. Where were the Thebans to retrieve these resources from as the maintenance of their armies stretched their finances? One strand of scholarship proposes the Persian King as the source for the required finances, without any evidence to substantiate the claim.[21] An alternative way to garner funding for this scheme is plausible, in which the Thebans collected the money elsewhere, rather than having to rely on the capricious monarch in the East.[22]

A closer look at the literary and epigraphic record illuminates the issue somewhat. Diodoros recounts that Epameinondas was 'to urge the peoples of Rhodes, Chios, and Byzantium to assist their schemes', which could be connected to an initial fund raising effort for the building of the fleet.[23] In a recent article, Schachter proposed that this 'assistance' was a form of financial support towards the creation of a Boiotian armada with their mutual relationship cemented by an exchange of cults.[24] This particular form of reciprocity is not

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convinced to see it as an intertwined event, with both the decision and the voyage taking place in 364. Cf. Xen., *Hell*. 7.4.40 that Epameinondas was still in Thebes as a stratēgos, although the dating varies, it either took place in 364 or 363. Cf. Ruzicka 1998, 61 n.8 for a discussion and bibliography concerning the exact date the vote took place. Of course, amassing a fleet takes time, but perhaps Epameinondas rented fleets from other friendly poleis. This rented fleet could be a possibility if the voyage to Byzantion, Chios and Rhodes had been planned in advance, as Schachter 2014b asserts, with Epameinondas returning the rented ships to Boiotia. These agreements would then have been made in advance, without the official approval of the Boiotian assembly. That the Boiotians sent ships to Byzantion (Isok. 5.53) may be the returning of the ships, as Byzantion needed them at that point.

20 Diod. 15.79.1.

21 Carrata Thomes 1952, 22–24; Fortina 1958, 80–81; Buckler 1980, 161; reaffirmed by Buckler 2003, 363. For the (convincing) criticism, see Stylianou 1998 495.

22 This stance is unsurprising, as the Persian King in previous instances had granted substantial amounts to convince poleis to create a navy, only to discontinue payment for the maintenance of the fleet, cf. *Oxy. Hell*. 19.2.

23 Diod. 15. 79.1: Ῥοδίους δὲ καὶ Χίους καὶ Βυζαντίους προτρέπεσθαι βοηθῆσαι ταῖς ἐπιβολαῖς.

24 Schachter 2014b. There is an example of Rhodian financial sponsorship to cultivate better relations with other states, cf. *IPriene* 37.79.

uncommon to the Greek world. Other examples of cultic exchanges to create or reinforce between poleis are plentiful.[25]

On closer inspection, as Schachter notes, the cults in question take on a more symbolic meaning. For example, the cult of Tlepolemos that was located near the primary Boiotian naval base Aulis.[26] Besides his role as the mythological founder of Rhodes, Tlepolemos was also the son of Herakles, the symbol for Theban military aspirations.[27] The cult thus reflected and referred to the intentions the Boiotians entertained with their naval plans. Another similar correlation can be traced in the Achilles cult near Tanagra. Its sanctuary would have overlooked Aulis and the cult was perhaps introduced into the cultic landscape from Byzantion, since the hero's worship was widespread in the Pontic and Black Sea region. Moreover, he was venerated under the epithet *pontarches,* which strengthens the connection to the nautical aspirations cherished by the Boiotians. But cults were not only introduced, they were exported as well. An oft-neglected boundary stone from Chios demarcated the sanctuary of 'Boiotian Demeter' (Δήμητρος Βοιωτάης) on the island. She functioned as the patron deity of Thebes, something which did not escape Fritz Graf. He notes that she was the leading deity of the Thebans.[28] From this we may conclude that the Thebans attempted to sway these states – important both strategically and ideologically, as they were amongst the founding members of the League. They could have nurtured the hope that these ties led to financial support for the envisaged fleet.

The financing of their project is also traceable in a different way. A significant number of coins from the 360s have survived that indicate the Boiotians endeavoured to solidify their economic relations with various poleis to create a lasting network in the Aegean. It enabled them to purchase the necessary raw materials for the fleet, as well as equip their ships with additional manpower. The so-called electrum coinage was minted with the aim of usage in the Northern Aegean and the Propontic Region, precisely the two areas rich in resources required for the construction of a fleet, in addition to their strategic

25 One example is Asklepios in Athens, see Garland 1992, 122–126.

26 Buckler 2008a contra Fossey 1979, who argues for a different site as the main harbour.

27 One way wherein 'genetic' ties reinforced intra-Boiotian relations, is between Thebes and Thespiai for instance, as Herakles had impregnated the daughters of Thespios, cf. Schachter 2014a, 77.

28 The inscription in question is: I. *Ch.* 13; cf. SEG XVII 396. Cf. Graf 1985, 435; Schachter 2014b, 327. Graf 1985, 69–70: 'Im Hintergrund mag thebanischen Anspruch stehen aus den Jahren der thebanischen Hegemonie, ist doch Demeter – freilich die Thesmophoros – Hauptgöttin der thebanischen Akropolis.'

importance to Athenian interests in the region.[29] Possibly, another set of coins allude to a connection between Rhodes and Thebes, their ties illustrated by the depictions of Herakles and the Rhodian rose.[30] These various forms of currency demonstrate the Thebans' elaborate design and formed the financial blueprint to sustain their maritime strength in the medium and long run and allowed them to acquire more influence in these strategically important regions.

Their interest in expanding their network is reflected in their dispersed network of *proxenia*. Before the *proxenia* developed into a more ceremonial and personal role, the awardee was supposed to serve the interest of the bestowing polis, whether in a political or economic sense and was regarded as its recognised representative of that polis in his hometown Thebes.[31] Having Boiotian interests represented throughout the Aegean was instrumental to procure potential political and financial help. Unsurprisingly, there was a surge in Theban awards of *proxenia* around the mid-360s. Recipients are found in those areas of the Aegean targeted by Epameinondas' diplomatic mission, suggesting a tantalising connection to the naval scheme. One recipient came from Byzantion, its strategic location at the entry of the Hellespont ensuring control over the access to the Black Sea and one of the primary Athenian grain

29 Gartland 2013 for the theory that the electrum coinage can be connected to the Theban plans in the 360s. He assumes the 'Persian gold' would have been used to mint the coinage. Other sources for the materials for electrum could have come from elsewhere, i.e. the poleis visited by Epameinondas, as the coins were of a low denomination as Gartland himself notes. Cf. Schachter 2003 = 2016 for Tanagran control over Aulis. See also Heskel 1997 for Athenian (strategic) interest in the Northern Aegean. It demonstrates the Thebans' plans for continued control over the area, as it was exactly the lack of a standard currency that haunted the Spartan-dominated thalassocracy of the 390s (Rutishauer 2012, 143–44).

30 Hepworth 1989 cf. Schachter 2014 327 is sceptical of the connection and bases most of his arguments for this on Buckler 1980, 130–150, and discontent over Epameinondas' policies in Thebes. However, most of the trouble Epameinondas encountered was in the earlier 360s, before the naval voyage. Considering the enthusiastic response by the Theban assembly to pursue the naval programme, it would be remarkable if a ′blatant′ commemoration would cause discord. Nevertheless, as Schachter 2017 shows, one should be cautious trying to squeeze more out of numismatic evidence than possible despite the tantalising possibilities. The same goes for Hepworth's reconstruction; the rose was indeed the symbol of Rhodes, but the rose depicted on the Boiotians coins does not resemble its Rhodian counterparts. To associate these coins with Epameinondas' voyage may be too far-fetched. What it does show, is that the coins were minted during Epameinondas' tenure, perhaps to procure resources or pay crews.

31 On proxenia, see Herman 1987, 130–155. Recent excellent research on proxenia has revealed more of the intricacies of this institution, see Mack 2015, 22–89 and the way clusters of proxenia can tells us something about specific relations and interests between poleis.

routes.[32] Another *proxenos* came from Rhodes, situated on the grain route from Athens to Egypt and one of the insular states targeted by Epameinondas.[33] Both poleis formed a part of the Theban general's itinerary for 364, his warm welcome ensured by the presence of a proxenos in both poleis. If their presence was a precursor to a visit, other poleis may have been frequented in 364 as well. It seems that the Theban matrix of proxenoi stretched beyond the three poleis mentioned in Diodoros' account and suggests a more elaborate scheme to procure funds.[34]

Several examples from Thebes illustrate this point. One proxeny decree honours a certain Atheniaos from Macedonia, whose family had experience in nautical affairs.[35] In addition to their maritime prowess, Athenaios' family ostensibly belonged to the upper-echelons of the Macedonian elite – as proxenoi were wont to be – and thus could exert influence on behalf of the Thebans in an area known for its excellent shipbuilding timber.[36] Here Boiotian and Athenians interests overlapped, as we find the Athenian general Timotheos campaigning in the region and conquering several Macedonian ports such as Pydna in the later 360s.[37] Another possible proxenos originated from either Perinthos or Olynthos, as the restoration is uncertain.[38] The latter is an

32 The inscription in question is IG VII 2408, l.2. Cf. Roesch 1984 for the connection between this proxeny decree and the naval programme. For the importance of the grain supply, cf. Moreno 2007, who argues that at least half of the Athenians' grain supply was imported. For Boiotian relations with Byzantion in particular, cf. Russell 2017.

33 Knoepfler 1978, 390. His restoration of *Ροδιαν* in line 2 of the inscription has been criticized because of the eroded nature of the stone; Roesch 1984; Buckler 2008b, 204 n.18; Fossey 2014, 20. Their criticisms have not convinced me to disregard Knoepfler's restoration, especially Fossey's, who simply states that Paul Roesch believed the restoration incomprehensible.

34 One could add the inscription detailing the donations of proxenoi to the Boiotians in the Third Sacred War (357–346), cf. Rhodes and Osborne 2003 no. 57 and the analysis by Schachter 2016.

35 *SEG* 34 355, Rhodes and Osborne 2003, 218, dated to 365 BC by Roesch 1984 who connected it to the Macedonians and their shipbuilding timber. One of the Boiotarchs responsible for the award of proxeny was the great Boiotian leader Pelopidas. For Athenaios' family involvement in maritime affairs, see Ar. Ind. 18.3.

36 Perhaps the relations between Boiotia and Macedonia were further augmented by the return of the future Philip II of Macedonia to his home region, after his hostage period in Boiotia, during which he befriended Epameinondas, cf. Dio Chrysostom, Orat. 49.5. Changing Macedonian allegiances could also undermine the Athenian access to shipbuilding materials, cf. Psoma 2015.

37 Dein. 1.14.

38 Vlachogianni 2004–09. Another possibility is Korinth. Cf. Fossey 2014, 20–22, who proposes a Euboian recipient. Euboia, however, was already under firm Theban control after

intriguing option as this city had vied with the Athenians for influence in the region and was located close to Amphipolis, the apple of Athens' eye in their quest to reclaim their empire. The area frequently suffered from recurrent attacks by the naval hegemon and formed a primary target of Athenian policies throughout the 360s.[39] Awareness of the potential benefits the Thebans offered was ostensibly increased by the Persian King's willingness to recognise the Athenian claim to this region.[40] By establishing diplomatic links with these cities, the Thebans hoped to take advantage of any existent discontent.

Of course, these links offered more than political connections, as they provided access to resources. Proxeny decrees encompassed more than a political award to a certain individual; it instigated and confirmed a plethora of connections, including political interactions between poleis, but also economic relations.[41] One can envisage Epameinondas' voyage like a campaign of a presidential candidate, travelling around the country in an attempt to procure as much funding as possible for the intended goal: the presidency. In a similar vein the Theban politician traversed the Aegean to obtain as much financial support for his plans – the creation of a massive Boiotian fleet – as he could. The poleis on the itinerary – Byzantion, Chios and Rhodes – were targeted for several reasons. They were perfectly located to threaten the Athenian grain supply, but were also wealthy. Rhodes and Byzantion were wealthy trading poleis, due to their control of vital waterways. Chios was renowned for its slave trade and could bank on continued interest and trade due to the proximity of several customers, such as the Persian Empire.[42] From an economic perspective, it made sense for the Boiotians to target these poleis, as they could provide them with something they lacked: money to build a massive fleet and maintain an adequately equipped army to oppose any opponents.[43]

A different resource was manpower. These poleis possessed excellent navigators, sailors and shipbuilders.[44] There was an existent Boiotian navy, but for

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they left the Athenian League in 371 and would thus make no sense for a further attempt to establish diplomatic bonds. See also the remarks by Kalliontzis 2016. For the case for Perinthos, cf. Russell 2017.

39 Cf. Heskel 1997.

40 Xen., *Hell.* 4.1.2; Diod. 15.76.1.

41 Mack 2015, 90–181 for an elaborate description of all proxenia networks encompassed.

42 Theopompos *FGrHist* 115 F 122; Thuc. 8.40.2 and Arist., *Pol.* 1291b24.

43 The importance of external finances for the Theban war-effort is illustrated by their overview of funding received from external sources during the Third Sacred War, cf. Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 57. Also, as Beck 1997, 201 points out, the maintenance of the hegemonial position drained finances, see also Schachter 2017.

44 Gabrielsen 1997 for Rhodes; Chios was known for its excellent ship-building: Gartland 2013, 29.

an expansion of the standing fleet more crews were needed.[45] The Thebans also reached beyond the Aegean in their attempt to enlist expert manpower for their navy. One proxeny was awarded to a Carthaginian, Nobas, presumably for the help he could offer in training crews or navigating ships.[46] Furthermore, there is Timeas of Lakonia. The proxeny decree is accompanied by a magnificent relief, depicting the prow of a ship, as well as the baby Herakles strangling snakes – a symbol of Theban military power – and the Dioskouroi, famous protectors of shipmen. As proposed by Mackil, the grant should be perceived as part of the Boiotian naval scheme, especially considering the lineage of Timeas, whose family had been involved in nautical affairs since the early fourth century.[47] The specialisations of these men in maritime training could have induced the grant of these honours, in order to procure trained men for the envisioned fleet.[48]

Conversely, we also find eminent Boiotians receiving honours akin to the proxenia from Aegean poleis. The discovery in 1994 of a Knidian proxeny decree for Epameinondas has augmented our knowledge of the period. It contains the award of proxeny to the legendary general, coupled with the right to sail into the city's harbour duty free. The citizens of Knidos hoped to obtain

45 Buckler 1980, 162–4, Van Wees 2004, 209, n. 34. Cf. Cawkwell 1972, 272 n.1; Buckler 1980, 308, n.27. for Boiotian naval experience.

46 IG VII 2407, connected to the naval plans by Roesch 1984 and Fossey 1994b. The idea that the award was based on Nobas' nautical prowess goes back to the 1930s, cf. Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 43, who refuse to connect it with the Boiotian naval plans (p. 219) based on the naval tradition existent in Boiotia (n.45) and the fact that Carthaginian traders were not an anomaly in fourth century Greece, relying on Cawkwell and Buckler mostly for their position on the matter. However, Cawkwell and Buckler's proposals are based on their assertion that the Boiotian naval plans were a complete failure. Plus, Carthaginian naval power was at a highpoint at this time, cf. Mackil 2008, 182. The issue surrounding the proxeny decree is exacerbated since the inscription has been lost after its initial discovery. For several new restorations of this decree, cf. Knoepfler, *BE* 2009. 261.

47 Mackil 2008, 183–184, cf. Knoepfler, *BE* 2009.260 and SEG 55.564. Other dates for the proxeny award, e.g. 370/69, had been proposed earlier by Knoepfler 2005, 77–79. Perhaps Timeas was a Spartan exile, which could explain his pro-Theban stance and the appearance of a Tegean deity, Athena Alea, on the relief, Mackil 2008, 184. If Knoepfler's re-dating of the proxeny award to two Athenians pre-338 could be pushed even further than the 340s (SEG 28, 466; Knoepfler 1978, 393) it may have a Boiotian attempt to integrate these Athenians into the maritime plan as well, either as crew member or as experienced sailors.

48 Although, as Mack 2015 duly asserts, grants of proxenia were not simply instigated based on purely political gains as other aspects of interstate relations and internal politics also factored into the equation.

influence with the new Greek power, by appointing one of its eminent leaders as their official representative. Moreover, this remarkable document hints at the consensual behaviour from at least one city on the coast of Asia Minor towards the Boiotian plans.[49]

Epameinondas and the Southern Aegean

The picture may be supplemented with evidence from the island of Delos, a hotbed of anti-Athenian sentiment in this period.[50] Epameinondas perhaps frequented the island on his way home from Rhodes. In third-century temple records his name has been restored, with the general returning a crown to the Delians. Unfortunately these inscriptions are problematic as they are cumulative inventory lists that contain earlier material as well. Doubts continue to exist surrounding the historicity of Epameinondas' sojourn, partially due to these issues, but a Boiotian visit should not be out of the question. The Delian rebellious attitude towards the Athenians would make the island a primary target for the retrieval of funds and support.[51] As Epameinondas' voyage had economic overtones, a visit to Delos makes perfect sense because of its pan-hellenic sanctuary and its role as a hub in the Cycladic economic network.[52] Coupled with the anti-Athenian sentiment, the potential for revolt or support for must have been attractive for a visit, especially as Delos was still an essential cog in the fourth century Athenian wheel of international relations. The concept was not unprecedented, as the Spartans also targeted Delos in the 370s in an attempt to counter the Athenian resurgence in the Aegean. These examples, albeit with a healthy dose of caution, suggest that the Boiotians created a diplomatic network

49 SEG 44.901; Blümel 1994; cf. Buckler 2008b; *BE* 2008, 237 for further commentary. Although the details in the last two lines of the proxeny decree, mentioning the right to sail in the harbour duty free, are restored, there has been a consensus on the reconstruction of the decree.

50 Osborne 1974, who refers to events in 375 when Spartan naval incursions in the area caused upheaval on the island, resulting in the death of several Athenian magistrates. For the importance of Delos in the Athenian naval leagues, see Constantakopoulou 2007 and for the Second League especially, Dreher 1995, 198–271.

51 Tuplin 2005, 55–58, who mentions the inscriptions in question. Although he agrees that a certain reconstruction of 'Epameinondas' or 'Apameinondas' is far-fetched, he does stress that ID 104.12.86ff is a reliable inscription that pertains to the relations between Delos and Thebes.

52 Rutishauer 2012. He calls the Cyclades 'one the prizes won by Sparta', 141.

FIGURE 4.2 Boiotian networks
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throughout the Aegean with their charismatic leader Epameinondas as its spindle.[53]

Another way to reinforce political ties lay in the sphere of 'kinship'. Several parts of the coast of Asia Minor and the Black Sea claimed to have been colonised by Boiotians and retained a 'genetic' relationship with their former homeland (Figure. 4.2).[54] One example is Herakleia Pontike on the Black Sea coast. Relying on their shared origins, they reached out to Epameinondas and his fleet, hoping that their communal origin would translate into substantial help to resolve their civil strife.[55] No help came, although the substantial Heraklean navy would have been conducive towards creating a naval supremacy in the Aegean. The Boiotian reticence was precipitated by the town's location within the Persian King's lands. Interference, therefore, would entail intervention in the King's affairs, something best avoided.[56]

The reluctance towards Herakleia does not prevent the potential utility of kinship ties to effectuate political gains in other areas.[57] Although highly

53 According to Buckler 2008c, this conforms to the framework of Theban power, revolving around the personal prowess of men such as Pelopidas and Epameinondas, but see the remarks by Schachter 2016.

54 Cf. Burstein 1976; Fossey 1994a for more on the Boiotian role in colonising these regions.

55 Justin 16.4.3.

56 Jehne 1999, 340.

57 In this regard it might be interesting to note the contributions from Byzantine *synedroi* to the Theban war fund in the Third Sacred War, cf. Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 57. It also mentions a proxenos from Tenedos in l. 15. Because Tenedos was part of the 'Aiolian'

speculative, kinship ties allow for the possibility of adding another destination to Epameinondas' itinerary: Lesbos. A visit to the island would not have been completely out of the question, as in previous altercations with the Athenians, shared feelings of kinship between the Lesbians and Thebes were exploited for political gains.[58] Considering the re-assurance Mytilene needed from the Athenians after their conclusion of an alliance with Sparta in 369,[59] Boiotian interest in stimulating these feelings of discontent is possible, especially as Lesbos lies *en route* from Byzantion to Rhodes. However, the Lesbians seemed to have remained loyal to the Athenians during the 360s and the following decade.[60]

Some scholars have attempted to include several other poleis on Epameinondas' voyage. Buckler includes Kos since the island fought alongside Byzantion, Chios and Rhodes in the Social War. Heskel agrees with this point of view, surmising that Kos was not incorporated into Diodoros' list of cities frequented by the Boiotian fleet, because no agreement between the Thebans and the Koans had been reached.[61] However, this conjecture cannot be sustained, as it rests on the assumption that an embassy was sent in 366 with no further basis than Diodoros' assigning the Koan synoecism to that year. As the date for the assembly's decision to construct the fleet is disputed, I believe the inclusion of Kos is to be rejected.[62] Lastly, one scholar proposed to view Crete as a possible destination for Epameinondas on the premise that both the Boiotian general and Timotheos vied for the island's services and resources.[63]

Even without the latter assumptions, the Boiotians had created a widely disseminated network of political ties with many Aegean poleis. Yet, there

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kinship ties, it could be possible to observe a further political entwinement based on kinship ties. As he probably was appointed in an earlier stage, it could be connected to the naval programme, cf. Mackil 2008 183.

58 Thuc. 3.2.3. A Theban commander was sent to Mytilene to support the revolt; Thuc. 3.5.3. In 411 B.C., the Boiotians encouraged the Lesbian poleis to revolt; Thuc. 8.5.2. It shows the recurrent interest in this island, based on the existent kinship ties. For more on this relationship, see Fragoulaki 2013, 111–118.

59 Rhodes and Osborne, no.31 with further commentaries.

60 The case of Tenedos, which remained loyal to the Athenians in this period, regardless of the presence of a Boiotian proxenos donating money to the Thebans in the 350s (although he was aptly named Athenodoros) is illuminating in this aspect. Cf. Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 57, ll.14–15 for Athenodoros. For the continued good relations between Athens and Tenedos, see also Tod 1948, no. 175 and 222–23.

61 Heskel 1997, 66; Buckler 2003, 364.

62 See Ruzicka 1998, 61, n.8 for the discussion on the exact date the Theban assembly decided on building the fleet and the date of Epameinondas' visits in the Aegean.

63 Dušanić 1980, who bases himself largely on comic fragments.

appears to have been no concrete results for all this hard labour and the question remains how successful the voyage was.

Contested Hegemonies: Epameinondas' Aegean Voyage in 364

Any explanation of Epameinondas' success hinges on the way Diodoros' account of this particular episode and its aftermath is perceived. According to the first century historian, the Boiotian general was dispatched to convince Byzantion, Chios and Rhodes to assist the Theban naval enterprise. Aware of the threat this voyage posed, the Athenians sent out a fleet under Laches to neutralise the danger. His intervention was counterproductive with the Boiotian ships overawing the fleet. As Schachter pointed out in his recent article, it suggests that the creation of the fleet had been preceded by negotiations with the three poleis Epameinondas called in at. That the Athenians were forewarned about the existence of the fleet and its movements suggests that this had been a fairly long drawn out process.[64] However, it is the ensuing part of Diodoros' narrative that has triggered intense debate, as Epameinondas 'τὰς πόλειστοῖς Θηβαίοις ἐποίησεν'.[65] The exact translation of this phrase remains a matter of dispute. Some prefer to translate it as 'he (*sc.* Epameinondas,) procured the independent cities for the Thebans.'[66] Others opt for 'he made the cities friendly to Thebes', as is the case in the Loeb edition. A final option reads 'he won over the cities to the Theban side'.[67] Thus, we are confronted with a threefold of translations for this particular phrase.

Accordingly, the various translations suggest varying levels of success for Epameinondas' ambassadorial mission.[68] At one end of the spectrum is Ruzicka's assertion that the Boiotian cruise precipitated a full-blown revolt against the Athenians with the participation of Byzantion, Chios and Rhodes. Correspondingly, he regards the Social War of 357–55 as a continuation of the conflict that started in 364, rather than a separate event. Ruzicka asserts that the

64 Schachter 2014.

65 Diod. 15.79.1.

66 Buckler 2008b 200–202. In Buckler's view, ἰδίας cannot refer to Thebes, but to the cities, which were 'independent' to pursue their own policies and were influenced by external powers.

67 Hornblower 1982, 200 n.137; Ruzicka 1998, 61; Bresson 1999, 86, n.10.

68 Full-blown revolt: Ruzicka 1998. Moderate success: Hornblower 2011[4], 262; Russell 2017. Total failure; Buckler 2003, 363; Buckler 2008 200–2. Cf. Accame 1941, 179; Cawkwell 1972, 270–3; Cargill 1981, 169; Rutishauer 2012, 176. Cf. Badian 1995 for the Athenian return to imperialism.

increasingly imperialist Athenian policy in the Aegean agitated the Persian Empire, causing the defection of these states as their fears for a renewed conflict with the Achaemenids grew, especially with Rhodes and Chios located in the front line. Compelling as his case seems, the theory is debatable at best. Nothing suggests that Rhodes and Chios shrugged off the yoke of the Athenian League in favour of an alliance with the Thebans.

On the other side of the spectrum is Buckler's claim that Epameinondas' voyage amounted to nothing as the embassy achieved no concrete results such as defections or alliances. Primarily basing himself upon Diodoros' account, who says that 'indeed if this man (Epameinondas) had lived on longer, the Thebans admittedly would have secured the mastery at sea in addition to their supremacy on land' supports this account with Isocrates and Plutarch.[69] However, Diodoros does not entirely reject any possibility of success in his account; he merely asserts that the Theban leader could have accomplished the complete mastery of the sea, which leaves a wide range of lesser successes remaining. Plutarch's wording suggests the Thebans pursued a strategy tailored to their strengths as a course of deliberate action, which does not equate with an utter failure.[70] Isocrates nowhere asserts that the Thebans failed in their pursuits; he merely claims that they sent ships to Byzantion as if they purposed to rule both land and sea, which was exactly their plan. His words hold less merit, as the orator was an apologist fantasising about the previous glory of Athens. He was not a historian but an orator. Often he reverted to a slight alteration of historical events and exaggeration.[71] Omitting any Boiotian successes in the Aegean, perceived as Athens' dominion, should come as no surprise. To consider Epameinondas' voyage as an unequivocal failure cannot stand.

A more nuanced approach is taken by Hornblower, who views the disaffected allies as being receptive to Epameinondas' entreaty. Unlike Ruzicka, Hornblower believes the plan mostly failed, with one exception: Byzantion. As we can infer from other sources, the polis on the Hellespont rose to the occasion and left the Athenian League when Epameinondas appealed, opting to join the Thebans instead.[72] The plausibility of this outcome is corroborated by

69 εἰ μὲν οὖν ὁ ἀνὴρ οὗτος πλείω χρόνον ἐπέζησεν, ὡμολογημένως ἂν οἱΘηβαῖοι τῇ κατὰ γῆν ἡγ εμονίᾳ καὶ τὴν τῆς θαλάττης ἀρχὴν προσεκτήσαντο (Diod. 15.79.2). Cf. Isok. 5.53; Plut., *Phil.* 14.2.

70 Πλὴν Ἐπαμεινονώνδαν μὲν ἔνιοι λέγουσιν ὀκνοῦντα γεῦσαι τῶν κατὰ θάλασσαν ὠφελειῶν τοὺς πολίτας, ὅπως αὐτῷ μὴ λάθωσιν ἀντὶ μονίμων ὁπλιτῶν, κατὰ Πλάτωνα, ναῦται γενόμενοι καὶ διαφθαρέντες, ἅπακτον ἐκ τῆς Ἀσιας καὶ τῶν νήσων ἀπελθεῖν ἐκουσίως (Plut., Phil. 14.2). Cf. Hornblower 2011[4], 264 on the shift in strategy.

71 Marincola 2014.

72 Dem., 9.34, cf. Rhodes and Osborne 2003 no. 57; Russell 2017. Cf. Buckler 2008c for his reasons not to include Byzantion.

several accounts that mention the Byzantines harassing Athenian grain-ships in 362/1, as well as the Thebans sending ships for their support.[73] Considering the profits this grain route fetched and the conquests in the Dardanelles by the Athenian admiral Timotheos, Byzantion's willingness to switch sides is understandable.[74] Perhaps kinship ties played a role too. There is a fourth century tradition of Boiotians partaking in the foundation of the city.[75] The possibility of Byzantion's defection is corroborated by the ensuing events as their harassment of Athenian grain-ships shortly after Epameinondas' voyage provoked a response from the Athenians. Timotheos besieged Byzantion and even subjugated the town.[76] Under the rules of the League, the admiral would have no reason to undertake such measures other than a defection from the alliance.[77] Another revolt ascribed to Epameinondas' travels is the Kean revolt, which was subdued in 363. Here anti-Athenian sentiment took on the form of slaughtering the Athenian proxenos. Nevertheless, the poleis on the island were separately re-admitted after their subjugation, as the Kean federation was split up to prevent a repeat.[78] The evidence supports the moderate position represented by Hornblower. The gravity of Byzantion's defection should not be underestimated, as the defection of a founding member of the League was a symbolic blow to Athens.

Several questions about this opaque situation still remain unanswered. What restrained the majority of poleis from joining in a revolt against Athens, despite the latter's increasingly aggressive expansionist behaviour that must have evoked memories of the fifth century? Contemporary sources mention that the turnaround in conduct in the 360s was ill-received by several members of the League.[79] In his treatise *On the Peace*, Isocrates criticises the treatment

73 Presumably this occurred in 362/1; [Dem.] 50.6; cf. [Arist.] *Oec.* 2.1346b29-30, 1347b24-25 and Isok. 5.53.

74 Nep., *Tim.* 1.3.

75 Jehne 1999.

76 Nep., *Tim.* 1.2: 'Olynthios et Byzantios bello subegit'. Cf. Ruzicka 1998, 67, n.27, disclaiming Nepos' utility as Isocrates does not mention Byzantion as being subjugated by Timotheos in his *Antidosis* (15.105–13), yet there is no mentioning of any former allies conquered by Timotheos. In concert with his treatise *On the Peace*, it does not seem unreasonable for Isocrates to omit any mention of Timotheos' attack on Byzantion.

77 For the revolt of Keos, Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 39.

78 Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 39, Ruzicka 1998, 62, n.11 note that the Kean revolt was an unintended consequence of the Theban voyage and attribute it to coincidence as the revolt was spurred on by the appearance of the fleet. There may have been stronger connections, cf. Mack 2015, 184 and 322.

79 See the noted difference between Isocrates' *Areopagiticus* and *On the Peace*, cf. Badian 1995, 77.

of the allies. In his opinion, a benign treatment of the members would be better suited to achieve the true aim of the League: to fight the Persians. In his mind the struggle with the Persians had propelled the Athenian to greater heights in the past.

Another source of agitation was the conquest of Samos by Timotheos in 365.[80] From a military perspective, his move was acceptable to all League members as it removed a Persian garrison from a strategically important location and limited the Persian threat to the eastern allies.[81] The Athenians' establishment of a cleruchy on Samos, however, was ill-received throughout the region. Although this decision did not directly defy the regulation of the League that stipulated that no cleruchies were to be instituted on allied soil - Samos was not an official member – this manoeuvre was bound to evoke recollections of the fifth century Athenian Empire. It reverberated across the Eastern Aegean, causing a stir. Several evicted Samians found refuge in cities along the coast of Asia Minor, including Rhodes, as a Samian inscription recording an official token of gratitude towards their beneficiaries suggests.[82] Anxiety was not limited to the insular poleis. Some Athenians voiced their concerns regarding this decision, warning their assembly of the backwash this unwarranted initiative could cause among other Greeks.[83] Ignoring the warning signs on the outcomes of this ill-conceived move, the Athenians pushed forward, agitating their allies. Possibly, the insular poleis would have been more susceptible to Theban overtures, similar to their readiness to switch allegiances at the end of the Peloponnesian War when many disgruntled Athenian allies rose in revolt, stirred on by the Persian-backed Spartans. Yet, except for Byzantion, none of the other targeted poleis were receptive to the idea of sponsoring the Boiotians. Apparently, the situation in the 360s differed from earlier instances. Which reasons lay behind the reluctance to aid the Theban plans?

One answer to that question seems pretty straight-forward: any war would involve the necessary investments in capital and manpower and probably lead to losses in both. These could increase the chances of civil disobedience or worse, an overthrow of the governments. Moreover, Byzantion, Chios and

80 Dem. 15.3–15, especially 15.15: 'For they (The Rhodians) grudged you the recovery of your rights'. This could refer to Samos, or the renewed claim to Amphipolis. It is probably the recovery of empire in general being for the date, see Habicht 1996.

81 Isoc. 15.109 for the strategic importance of Samos.

82 Hornblower 1982, ch.5 and 199. Cleruchy: Heracl. Pont., *FHG* 2.216; Diod. 18.8.9; Strabo 14.1.18.

83 Arist., *Rhet*. 1384.b32 mentions a certain Kyidas, who may have been punished for his conviction by being forced to partake in the cleruchy, see Hornblower 2011[4], 261.

Rhodes were focused on trade. Their involvement in warlike activities could damage their profits.[84] Nevertheless, similar motives did not prevent them from jumping ship and aligning themselves with the new contender, the Persian-sponsored Spartans, at the end of the Peloponnesian War. Several decades later, the tables were turned. This time it were the re-emergent Athenians who benefitted from Persian funds in an attempt to overthrow the Spartan thalassocracy to pave the way for the formation of the Athenian League. With these examples in mind, Thebans successes should have been larger with the financial and political support of the Persian king.

But the idea of Persian financial sponsorship has recently been criticized. Rather, the planned Boiotian fleet was financed by smaller internal beneficiaries, instead of a single external sponsor.[85] Part of the hesitation shown by Rhodes and Chios can then be connected to their stakes in the funding of the Boiotian fleet. Investing a substantial amount of resources in the creation of a navy capable of opposing the Athenians would only be beneficial if a successful outcome was plausible. It seems that it was the uncertain prospects of the proposed Boiotian thalassocracy that restrained the insular poleis from withdrawing from the Athenian League. Perhaps the lack of Theban naval traditions bothered states such as Rhodes.[86] But a similar issue did not matter when the Spartans appealed to the insular poleis at the end of the Peloponnesian War. Could there have been other reasons that cast doubt amongst poleis such as Rhodes and Chios?

The Persian Empire, Asia Minor and the Aegean

In earlier instances, any new contestant for naval hegemony of the Aegean, e.g. the Spartans at the end of the Peloponnesian War or the Athenians in the 390s, could rely on the political support of the Persian king. This support was often decisive in overturning the current power. His sponsorship convinced the discontented allies to shift allegiances, thereby taking away the base of

84 Ruzicka 1998, 66, from the perspective of an ensuing Athenian-Persian conflict.

85 Schachter 2014,. That ties in well with recent investigations of the Persian Empire that stress the financial limitations of the Empire and offer a different perspective on the Persian interventions in the Greek political sphere. Rather than "balancing" the Greek powers, the King strove to maintain stability at the edge of his realm and employed various Greek poleis to police that stability, eventually leading to the treaties known as the King's Peace: Hyland 2017.

86 Buckler 2008b, 180 shows there was an existent naval tradition in Boiotia.

any maritime power in the Aegean: the insular poleis and emporia. Their willingness to change loyalties was stimulated by the repressive behaviour of the former hegemons. Persian influence gave the final push. This scenario did not occur in Thebes' attempt to instigate a revolt in 364, with the exception of Byzantion. This suggests that in 364 Persian support was lacking. The Great King's involvement can be further limited, not only negating the previous assumption of financial investment, but also of him or his satraps and Aegean agents politically backing the Boiotian plan.

If we look at several earlier and later examples, it becomes clear that whenever the Persian monarchs interfered in Aegean affairs in support of a contender for naval hegemony, the latter was successful. This argument might oversimplify related factors in the Theban naval scheme, but it illustrates the importance of the Persian king's influence. A first example concerns the later phases of the Peloponnesian War. That war was stalemated for the first twenty years. Even the Sicilian catastrophe was unable to bring Athens conclusively to its knees. Matters changed after the Persian King granted substantial amounts of gold for the Spartan war-effort. It led to a breakthrough in the war, with Athenian allies in the Aegean jumping ship and joining the Spartans.[87] Conversely, only a decade later the King offered political and financial backing to the Athenians in similar fashion to topple the Spartan hegemonial position in the Aegean.[88] The King showed himself to be pragmatic, willing to alter his allegiances to keep the Greeks off balance and have them entangled in internecine altercations. Again, the Persian protégé was successful, only to have its fortunes turned against them in the ensuing decade. The re-emergence of Athenian naval power during that decade propelled the King to shift his interests once more, turning back to the Spartans to curb Athenian naval enterprises in the Aegean.[89] As there is no evidence for Achaemenid involvement in the Theban naval scheme we can assume that the King did not offer his full support to the Thebans.

Our sources indeed suggest that the Thebans did not galvanise the King's opinion on the matter. There are hints that the Persians initially offered their support to the Thebans in 367, but that their endorsement had evaporated by the time of Epameinondas' naval voyage and plans to create a massive Boiotian fleet. In 367 Pelopidas was sent to Susa to reaffirm the previous good relations between the monarch and the Thebans. The Great King was to impose a new Common Peace for the Greeks, but now with the Thebans as its enforcers

87 Tritle 2010, 168–171 and more extensively: Hyland 2017, 50–119.
88 Xen, *Hell.* 4.3.10-12; Diod. 14.-83.5–7; Nep., *Conon.* Hyland 2017, 123–147.
89 Xen., *Hell.* 4.25.1; Diod. 14.94.2.

instead of the Spartans. Artaxerxes II, the king, was supportive and indeed proclaimed a new treaty for the Greeks poleis to adhere to with the Thebans implementing it. The plan failed because the Greek poleis, Athens included, were reluctant to adhere to a Theban enforced peace and existing enmities among the Greek poleis continued.[90]

The Athenians lost control of the Oropia to the Thebans in 366. Instead of pursuing the reclamation of this territory, they negotiated a different deal with the Great King: in return for leaving the Oropia to the Thebans and acquiescing in their hegemony over Boiotia, the King would support the Athenian claim to Amphipolis. He thereby recognised their right to conquer the city, which had been a goal of Athenian foreign policy ever since they lost control of it during the Peloponnesian War. Basically it meant an acknowledgement of Athens' renewed claim to empire.[91] Crucial to understanding the importance of this event is the history of Athens' incessant obsession with the Northern Aegean. The prolonged warring in this area was one of the issues troubling the fragile concord within the Second Athenian League, as it emptied the coffers of the allies without any mutually beneficial returns. That the relations between Athens and its allies were indifferent at best is demonstrated by the lack of support for the Athenian claim to the Oropia. For the members of the League, the Great King's willingness to bargain with the Athenians signalled that there was no help to be expected from Artaxerxes II if they wished to oppose the leader of the alliance. For the Thebans, it momentarily signalled that Artaxerxes was still on their side.[92]

The ensuing years confirm the Thebans were unsuccessful in their role as enforcers of the King's Peace. That claim could certainly no longer be maintained in 365, as Xenophon notes.[93] Judging from the presence of Agesilaos in

90 Xen., *Hell.* 7.1.38-40. Cf. Xen., *Hell.* 7.1.35-6; Plut., *Pel.* 30.3–4 for the King's shift of allegiance from Athens to Thebes.

91 Cf. Badian 1995 and Heskel 1997 for the importance of Amphipolis in Athenian imperialism. With one of the clauses in the Peace Treaty, the King left open the possibility of shifting allegiances back to the Athenians if need be, cf. Ruzcika 1998, 64; Xen., *Hell.* 7.1.37.

92 This also helps the dating of the Theban assembly's decision to build the fleet. If it indeed took place in 366, as some suggest (see n.43), it seems striking that the Thebans would be willing to negotiate such a bad deal from the viewpoint of Aegean hegemony. Perhaps they did start reaching out to poleis in the Athenian League, as Schachter 2014 proposes, without moving on to putting the plans for the fleet to the vote. Therefore I follow Ruzicka in his assertion that the vote must have taken place in 364, Ruzicka 1998, 61 n.8. For the timespan needed to amass the fleet, see n.21.

93 Xen., *Hell.* 7.1.39-40, 4.6–11. Despite Xenophon's strong anti-Theban bias (cf. Cartledge 1987, 62–3), it is a given that many poleis refused to adhere to the peace, which was not a Xenophonic twist on events.

Asia Minor, as well as the capture of Samos by Timotheos and his assistance to the rebellious satrap Ariobarzanes that same year, it does not seem unfounded.[94] The conquest of Samos could also be perceived as a show of force by the Athenians, hoping to convince the Persian King to reconsider his pro-Theban stance. That was not unprecedented, especially since Artaxerxes II had been hesitant in his support for the Boiotians from the beginning.[95] Perhaps the Athenians were successful in their pursuits, as we hear of no Persian counteractions against them. Timotheos' activities in the following year were again focused on the Northern Aegean, instead of the Eastern.[96] The reluctant actions of the Great King may have convinced Epameinondas that the Boiotians had to find other ways to weaken the Athenians rather than rely on Persian support, especially as Artaxerxes was occupied by internal problems.[97] This realisation could have propelled the general to propose his new plans to the Theban assembly in 364.

Epameinondas would have felt confident enough to pursue this policy without external help. In 364, refugees from Thebes contacted dignitaries and nobles in Orchomenos to win their support for an oligarchic coup in Thebes. The plot failed and the Thebans retaliated by razing Orchomenos to the ground and selling its inhabitants into slavery.[98] With Plataia torn down and Thespiai defused, Boiotia was firmly in Theban hands.

Moreover, the appeal by Herakleia Pontike testifies to the precarious relation between the Thebans and the Persian King. During his diplomatic mission the citizens of Herakleia had reached out to the Boiotian leader and asked him to settle their disputes.[99] Their approach fell on deaf ears as he refrained from interfering. His reticence is remarkable as the considerable size of the polis' fleet would have been a welcome ally in the Theban struggle with Athens. According to Jehne, it was Herakleia's location within the domains of the King

94 Xen., *Ages*. 2.26, albeit that the king was there without Spartan troops.

95 Ruzicka 1998, 64. Cf. Xen., *Hell*. 7.137 that the King would not hesitate resuming a pro-Athenian policy. Cf. Nep., *Tim*. 1.3; Isoc., 15.111 and Dem. 15.9 for the Athenian viewpoint of Timotheos' operations in 365.

96 Diod. 15.81.6.

97 F.i. the rebellion in Egypt that lasted until 350 (Ruzicka 2012, 134–145), and the Satraps' Revolt in Asia Minor in the later 360s. (The historicity of this revolt has been doubted; see Weiskopf 1989); cf. *Oxy. Hell*. 19.2, where Artaxerxes is portrayed as lacking funds for fleet payments in the Aegean.

98 Diod. 15.79.

99 Justin 16.4.2-3: quidem cum plebs et tabulas novas et divisionem agrorum divitum inpotenter flagitarent, diu re in senatu tractata cum exitus rei non inveniretur, postremum adversus plebem nimio otio lascivientem auxilia a Timotheo, Atheniensium duce, mox ab Epaminonda Thebanorum petivere.

that caused Epameinondas' weariness.[100] An intervention could have compromised the relations between the King and the Boiotians and engendered a shift of allegiance. However, the city was located in the area ruled by Ariobarzanes, one of the Great King's satraps who had risen in revolt. Epameinondas could have done Artaxerxes a favour by installing a pro-Persian ruler in Herakleia, thwarting the disobedient satrap who relied on the Athenians and Spartans for support.[101] Perhaps relations with the monarch were less cordial than is normally assumed, as the potential of utilising the Herakleian fleet for his own purposes did not entice Epameinondas to act.

Other evidence, according to some scholars, comes from Knidos. In their view, the Knidian proxeny decree shows that the Persian King backed Epameinondas. Its inhabitants were allowed to award proxenia to whomever they wished; so long it did not affront Artaxerxes or Mausolos.[102] By allowing the citizens of Knidos to honour Epameinondas with proxeny, the Karian satrap Mausolos unequivocally voiced his support for Artaxerxes' policy. However, it does not prove that Epameinondas' ventures were part of the King's plans. All it shows is that the Theban statesman's new status caused no offence to him. In fact, Buckler names several examples of western Anatolian cities awarding a combination of proxenia and the right to harbour to demonstrate Epameinondas' importance. This is contradicted by the fact that in these instances the cities offered these privileges to local potentates in Asia Minor attempting to strengthen their own position within the Achaemenid Empire.[103] Given the relative independence that most local rulers enjoyed under Persian rule, these awards were mostly of local significance. Mausolos was agitated by the capture of Samos and the proxeny is probably related to his interest in supporting Epameinondas with hopes of fomenting rebellion among the Athenian allies.[104] If things turned out in his favour, there was also the possibility of intervening military with his own large fleet against Athens in support of the Thebans.[105]

Without Artaxerxes backing Epameinondas' plans, the majority of Athens' allies would not risk a rebellion. Their hesitance is understandable, as no Greek

100 Jehne 1999, 340.

101 Xen., *Hell.* 4.1.40; Nep., *Datames* 8.5–6. Cf. Ruzicka 1998, 65 and Weiskopf 1989.

102 Buckler 2008b, 209–10.

103 In 366/5, Mausolos helped the Persian king quell a rebellion of Ariobarzanes, only to rise in revolt in 362/1 at the earliest. See Ruzicka 1998, 65 n.22.

104 Considering his role in the Social War (357–55) where he is called the 'prime instigator and persuader' of the rebellious allies (Dem. 15.3).

105 Xen., *Ages.* 2.26–7 Mausolos apparently had sent a fleet of a hundred ships to battle Ariobarzanes.

power had ever overthrown a dominant naval power in the Aegean without access to the monarch's deep coffers and political assistance. Epameinondas' diplomatic mission proved futile. None of the allies save Byzantion wished to revolt against Athens. Perhaps the ships sent to the Byzantines, mentioned by Isocrates, were part of the proposed fleet and a return for their investment. The lack of funding from either the maritime poleis or the Persian king can explain one remaining enigma of the Theban naval scheme: the complete disappearance of the massive Boiotian fleet from our written record – and possibly the Aegean itself – after Epameinondas returned from his voyage.[106]

One expects that such a large fleet was deployed frequently in the ensuing years and its ephemeral existence has caused considerable debate concerning its construction and the actual date of Epameinondas' proposal. The pertinent question is whether the construction actually took place. Scholars have re-dated the Assembly's decision on Epameinondas' proposal to the years prior to 364, to allow for the construction of the fleet. In support of its existence, the encounter between Epameinondas' and Laches' fleet is often referred to, as the size of the former's must have overawed the latter's.[107] This notion can be countered, as Diodoros nowhere refers to a strong fleet under Epameinondas' guidance.[108] Even a fleet of forty ships could be referred to as 'μετὰ δυνάμεως' and have intimidated Laches.[109] It was diplomacy that prevented open naval warfare. Although Laches had a large force under his command, an engagement with Epameinondas would have endangered the fragile existing peace.[110] It is possible that Epameinondas was accompanied by a smaller fleet on his diplomatic mission. The point is corroborated by the success of the Thessalian leader Alexander of Pherai a few years later. Alexander successfully sent out 'pirate ships' to combat the Athenians.[111] A small flexible fleet could have

106 The proxeny award for the Lakonian (Cf. Mackil 2008) may indicate that the fleet did not disappear but instead was put into action around the Peloponnese. Nevertheless, this theory remains speculative.

107 Buckler 1980, 161.

108 Diod.15.79.1: Λάχητα μὲν τὸν Ἀθηναίων στρατηγόν, ἔχοντα στόλον ἀξιόλογον καὶδιακωλύειν τοὺς Θηβαίους ἀπεσταλμένον, καταπληξάμενος καὶ ἀποπλεῦσαι συναναγκάσας.

109 This size for a standing Boiotian fleet would not be over imaginative, as we know they provided the Spartans with 25 ships during the Peloponnesian War and another 10 to the Lesbians; Thuc. 8.3.2; 5.2.

110 Ruzicka 1998, 61, n.8; Cawkwell 1972, 271. Cf. Mackil 2008, 182 for a different opinion. It reinforces the notion that Epameinondas indeed had a smaller fleet, as he would not want to risk his operations. If he set out with a hundred trireme fleet, he would not have feared to engage with Laches.

111 Diod. 15.95.1: λῃστρίδας ναῦς ἐκπέμψας. Cf. Rutishauer 2012, 178–185 on Alexander's success. Athenian counter-measures by concluding an alliance with the Thessalian

sufficed for the Theban ambassadorial mission, if the peace provided a diplomatic cushion that prevented military conflicts.

Another possible explanation for the disappearance of the fleet and its relatively quick amassment could be that the money procured from the Theban friends in insular poleis was not used to build ships, but to rent them. If that were the case, Epameinondas would have combined the standing Boiotian fleet, presumably numbering around twenty to thirty ships, and supplemented it with rented ships from other poleis. Instead of using the money to build a large fleet along with the needed infrastructure for such a project, the Thebans used this money to temporarily expand the fleet in the hopes of instigating a revolt throughout the Athenian League, especially as the money procured was granted to the Thebans by individual benefactors, rather than on behalf of the entire polis. These proxenoi were wealthy, but not wealthy enough to support the plans to build a hundred ships; their smaller donations may have gone a long way to a temporary fix for these issues, as it could have been sufficient to increase the Boiotian fleet to a noteworthy number. If the fleet was powerful enough, it could have convinced the rest of the population of Byzantion, Chios and Rhodes to join the Thebans instead of the Athenians. It would explain the short lived mention of the fleet, plus the amassment of the fleet on short notice.[112] Epameinondas would have felt confident enough to put the question to the vote, knowing that by presenting the plans to construct a massive armada, he may have been able to convince the discontent allies to revolt against the Athenians.

The fleet's disappearance from our sources becomes less mysterious if we assume that it only comprised the regular Boiotian fleet with several rented ships from other poleis, rather than the envisioned hundred ships.[113] Epameinondas sailed the Aegean in search of external investors for the Boiotian plans because the Great King offered no support. He appealed to several allies of the Athenians with whom the Boiotians enjoyed good relations, but unfortunately for the Theban statesman, he had to abandon his dream of naval supremacy of the Aegean, as his plans to incur a revolt came to no fruition.[114] After this

koinon to counter Alexander of Pherai are found in the epigraphic record, implying they took his actions seriously; see Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 44.

112 I would like to thank Albert Schachter for suggesting this possibility to me. It is not unprecedented, cf. Hdt. 6.89.

113 Carrata Thomes 1952, 13ff for more on the maintenance of a regular sized Boiotian navy since the fifth century.

114 Except for Byzantion, as noted before and perhaps Keos (see Rhodes and Osborne 2003, no. 39 and 40).

realisation, the fantasy of thalassocracy was quickly abandoned as more urgent needs required attention. The situation was exacerbated by the death of Pelopidas that left Epameinondas as the main protagonist in Boiotian affairs. Instead of concentrating on the Aegean, focus shifted back to the Peloponnese and Thessaly, as Theban influence in these regions was crumbling. The rising tensions in the Peloponnese forced their hand and they preferred consolidation of their power base on the peninsula over ambitious Aegean dreams.[115] These interventions in Peloponnesian affairs ultimately resulted in the Battle of Mantinea (362). The Thebans won the battle but lost Epameinondas. His death signalled the end of their hopes of attaining the thalassocracy once visualised.[116] The following years saw the rise of the Kingdom of Macedon, which would change the outlook of Greek politics forever. Though Thebes remained a substantial player in Greek affairs, it would soon be outshone by the Macedonians under their resourceful king Philip II, whose time in Thebes may have influenced his military and political skills.[117] Nevertheless, Epameinondas can perhaps find solace in Xenophon's description of his conduct on the battlefield of Mantinea, where the famous general 'led his army forward prow on, like a trireme', resulting in victory.[118] It was the closest he would get to a 'naval' victory over the Athenians.

Conclusion

The aim of this article had been to explore an under-appreciated aspect of the Theban hegemony; Epameinondas' attempt to create a naval hegemony in the mid-360s. Under his leadership, they had concocted a scheme to realise a grand dream of dethroning the Athenians and achieving full hegemony over Greece. Whilst working under the auspices of his enemies, it became clear that his goal was unattainable, as his recruiting and ambassadorial voyage produced few results. A major part of his shortfall had to do with the lack of Persian political, military or financial support, contrary to scholarly opinion. In earlier instances, Persian support played a pivotal role in overthrowing the prevalent maritime network in place. This picture is corroborated by an earlier and a later instance wherein the King's interference in Aegean politics proved to be decisive. Even at the apex of their power in the fifth century,

115 Hornblower 2011[4], 264.
116 Diod. 15.79.2.
117 Cf. Buckler 2003, 386–397.
118 Xen., 7.5.23-4 : ὁ δὲ τὸ στράτευμα ἀντίπρῳρον ὥσπερ τριήρη προσῆγε.

the Athenian Empire was no match for the resources of the Persian King. Previous successes had propelled Athenian ambitions even further, with numerous attempts to expand their influence in Asia Minor. These endeavours reached their zenith with the incursions into Egypt to support the rebellious province. They ended in disaster and when the Persians recovered Egypt, they could re-aim their full force at the western maritime power, forcing the Athenians to settle for a ceasefire as the overwhelming Persian strength proved to be too much.[119] Besides this fifth century example, one may add an event closely related to the Theban affairs of the 360s: the Social War between Athens and some of her allies (357–55).[120] Several allies had revolted, placing the Athenians in a precarious situation. Matters were quickly decided in the rebels' favour as the new Persian King Artaxerxes Ochus intervened. After recurrent incursions by the Athenian general Chares into Asia Minor to provide help to the rebellious satrap Artabazos, the monarch threatened to send a Persian fleet of three hundred ships to support Byzantion, Chios, Rhodes and Kos.[121] As Mausolos also provided assistance to the rebels, the Athenians were keenly aware of the damaging blow the King's intervention would cause, as his power was overwhelming compared to the weakened state of the Athenians.[122] They yielded to their fate and brokered a peace with the rebels, who left the League. These examples corroborate the picture painted before, that whenever the Achaemenid rulers intervened in Aegean affairs, the recipients of their favour were victorious. Consequently, we can conclude that in the various cases within this article, a landed empire trumped the maritime power. Therefore, if anything, this particular historical instance has shown the difficulty of competing with a pre-existent maritime power in the same arena, as the Theban attempt illuminates, and the volatile and vulnerable nature of maritime empires when confronted with the massive force and resources of a landed one.[123]

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119 Cawkwell 2005, 139–146. This ceasefire is also known as the Peace of Kallias, but whether or not it was an actual peace treaty or ceasefire remains a matter of debate.

120 Byzantion, Rhodes and Chios. Kos was an ally of these states and involved in the war, but not a part of the Athenian League: Sherwin-White 1978, 42–3, contra Cargill 1981. Moreover, the rebels were supported by the Persian Satrap Mausolos and a fleet of a hundred ships: Xen., *Ages.* 2.26–7.

121 Diod. 16.22. Considering the Athenian fleet in 357/6 B.C. consisted of 283 ships in total (IG II^2 1611, l.9) their response is understandable.

122 Hornblower 2011^4, 272–3.

123 Another, more modern example, may be the Dutch attempt of gaining a foothold in China when the former were at the highpoint of their power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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CHAPTER 5

The Ptolemaic Sea Empire

Rolf Strootman

Introduction: Empire or "Overseas Possessions"?

In 1982, archaeologists of the State Hermitage Museum excavated a sanctuary at the site of Nymphaion on the eastern shore of the Crimea. The sanctuary had been in use from ca. 325 BCE until its sudden abandonment around 250 BCE.[1] An inscription found *in situ* associates the site with Aphrodite and Apollo, and with a powerful local dynasty, the Spartokids.[2] Built upon a rocky promontory overlooking the Kimmerian Bosporos near the port of Pantikapaion (the seat of the Spartokids), the sanctuary clearly was linked to the sea. Most remarkable among the remains were two polychrome plastered walls covered with graffiti depicting more than 80 ships—both war galleys and cargo vessels under sail—of varying size and quality, as well as images of animals and people. The most likely interpretation of the ship images is that they were connected to votive offerings made to Aphrodite (or Apollo) in return for safe voyages.[3] Most noticeable among the graffiti is a detailed, ca. 1.15 m. wide drawing of a warship, dated by the excavators to ca. 275–250, and inscribed on its prow with the name "Isis" (ΙΣΙΣ).[4] The ship is commonly

1 All dates hereafter will be Before Common Era. I am grateful to Christelle Fischer-Bovet's for her generous and critical comments.

2 *SEG* XXXVIII 752; XXXIX 701; the inscription mentions Pairisades II, King of the Bosporos (r. 284/3–245), and his brother. Kimmerian Bosporos is the ancient Greek name for the Channel now known as the Strait of Kerch, and by extension the entire Crimea/Sea of Azov region; see Wallace 2012 with basic bibliography.

3 Both Apollo and Aphrodite were *sōtēres*, savior gods, who protected sailors and ships (Graf 1979; Carbon 2013; Eckert 2016). In the Hellenistic period, the Ptolemaic court promoted throughout the eastern Mediterranean the equation of Isis to Aphrodite, especially in her capacity as the protector of seafarers, and in turn equated *both* deities to the deified Arsinoe II and several subsequent Ptolemaic queens (Gasparro 2007; Plantzos 2011; Bonnet and Bricault 2016, 166–174).

4 Basch 1985; Grač 1987; cf. *SEG* XXXIV 756. That the letters ΙΣΙΣ are part of the ship and that "Isis" is the ship's name is convincingly shown by Murray 2002, 252–253. The claim in *SEG* XLV 997 ad (5) that "the Isis is the Ptolemaic flag-ship which officially visited Bosporos in 254 B.C." is sheer fantasy and is to be discarded; cf. Murray 2001, who demonstrates that the ship is a common trireme rather than one of Ptolemy II's "super galleys", endorsing the

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identified as a Ptolemaic vessel, testifying to the wide reach of Ptolemaic naval power.[5]

The Ptolemies were one of the three Macedonian dynasties that emerged victorious from the succession wars after the death of Alexander the Great in 323. Their empire existed until the death of the last, and best known, monarch, Kleopatra VII, in 30 BCE.[6] Being an expansionist power, the Ptolemies competed relentlessly with the Seleukids, the powerful Macedonian dynasty that dominated a vast land empire in the interior of Asia. Rival claims to universal hegemony led to a series of violent clashes between the two superpowers, the so-called Syrian Wars, that upset the entire eastern Mediterranean for more than a century. The Ptolemies and Seleukids continuously interacted with each other and a history of the Ptolemaic Empire cannot be written without taking this fundamental entanglement into account.

The Ptolemies are commonly known as the kings and queens of Egypt. In popular culture, the Ptolemies are presented as the pharaohs of an idealized Egypt, a tremendously ancient and unchanging civilization. The image is charged with Orientalistic stereotype, particularly when it comes to imagining Kleopatra, the seductive and deceitful "Queen of the Nile".[7] Such views have to a significant degree pervaded scholarship. To uphold the attractive notion of the Ptolemaic kingdom as a "traditional" pharaonic state, modern scholarship has largely ignored the non-Egyptian, imperial aspects of the Ptolemaic polity, while at the same time underestimating ethnic, cultural and political diversity

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excavator's first impression (Grač 1987, 90–95; *pace* Basch 1985; Vinogradov 1999); Murray 2002 does however endorse Vinogradov's postulation that the Isis brought an "Egyptian" embassy to the Kingdom of the Bosporos, with the specific intend of introducing there the cult of Isis and other Egyptian deities (*contra* this view, see the cautious remarks by Marquaille 2008, 51 n. 52). The Crimea was again within the Ptolemaic sphere of influence when Antony and Kleopatra proclaimed a "New Era", and coins celebrating this event crossed the Black Sea (Schrapel 1996, 209–223; spread of coins as a method and indication of empire: Bagnall 1976, 176–212).

5 The identification of the ship as Ptolemaic is based not only on its name, but also on its overall structure and form (Höckmann 1999, 307–308), as well as the type of ram attached to its bow (Murray 2001, 253–254). The Ptolemaic connection is rejected by Morrison 1996, 209.

6 The world of the Ptolemies has attracted much scholarly attention, among other things because of the relative abundance of sources in the form of papyri. The past decades saw the publication of several ground-breaking monograph-length studies, including Manning 2003; Stephens 2003; Véïsse 2004; Mueller 2006; Moyer 2011a; Török 2011; and Fischer-Bovet 2014.

7 For the image of Kleopatra in modern European painting, see Hughes-Hallett 1990; the Orientalistic image of the queen in Western cinema is discussed e.g. by Fössmeier 2001; Llewellyn-Jones 2002; and Wenzel 2005.

within Egypt itself,[8] treating Egypt as if it were a kind of modern nation state. It is hard not to become allergic to the worn-out cliché that Ptolemaic kingship was "double-faced", *i.e.* that the Ptolemies were both "traditional" pharaohs and Greek *basileis* (kings) for the sake of respectively their Egyptian and their Greek "subjects".[9] The pharaonic side of the Ptolemaic Janus head in fact was not so traditional at all. It rather was the product of a dynamic process of selecting and manipulating pre-existing cultural models—partly imposed top-down and partly a mediation between the interests of the dynasty and those of multifarious local elites. There may be some truth in the Janus head model *in* Egypt, where indeed we simultaneously find Egyptian and Greek (and "mixed") styles, for instance in royal portraiture.[10] But the image is entirely incorrect *outside* of Egypt, where we do not find this pharaonic representation.[11] And the alleged "Greek" monarchical representation was in fact an innovative pan-Hellenism aimed not only at Greeks (themselves an ethnically and culturally diverse category) but also at Nabateans, Judeans, Idumeans, Phoenicians, Syrians, Cypriots, Pamphylians, Lykians, Karians, Macedonians, Thracians, Libyans, Nubians, and others. There is, to be sure, no reason to assume that the "Greek" propaganda could not be directed at Egyptians as well. The Greek "face" in other words, was not so much Greek as it was *imperial*.[12]

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8 So e.g. Mooren 1975, 4: "unlike the Seleukids, the Ptolemies had to reckon with (not counting the Cypriots) only one native people, the Egyptians." The Ptolemaic Empire in fact was hardly less "multicultural" than the Seleukid Empire, as we will see.

9 But see Manning 2009, 3, rightly stating that the Ptolemaic polity in the interior of Egypt was "neither an *Egyptian*, nor a *Greek* state" but a new creation combining "elements of pharaonic, Persian, Macedonian, and Greek practice, with new modes of production and taxation".

10 Brophy 2015, who emphasizes however that these portraits are found in distinct contexts. There may exist yet another instance of the Ptolemaic emperor roleplaying as indigenous king: a series of small silver coins from Judea depicting the head of Ptolemy I on the obverse, and on the reverse an image of an eagle—symbol of the "imperial" deity Zeus but in this context perhaps *also* symbolizing Yahweh—with paleo-Hebraic inscription *yhd* (Yehud = Judea); a second coin type, carrying the same inscription, has on its reverse the head of Queen Berenike I; for both coin types see Lykke 2010, 80–81 with figs. 12 and 14, and further bibliography. The now more widely accepted idea that the religious reverse images on Hellenistic royal coinages were deliberately ambiguous to render them multi-interpretable, was first explored by Erickson 2011.

11 See Winter 2011 for the absence of Egyptian or Egyptianizing artefacts in the Ptolemaic settlements of the Aegean; and Palagia 2013 for the Greek style of royal portraiture spread all over Greece from central production centers such as Kos.

12 Or "cosmopolitan"; for references, see below, n. 38. The highest levels of the Ptolemaic court and army were dominated by ethnic Macedonians and Greek-speaking individuals from the Aegean, Alexandria and Cyrenaica; non-Greeks (Egyptians, Judeans) reached the top as "favorites", that is, outsiders favored by the king to challenge the power of

The imperial aspects of the Ptolemaic polity, however, have been consistently played down by the use of such terms as "foreign policy" or "overseas possessions".[13] For instance H. Braunert in an influential article published in 1964 transplanted the then current interpretations of modern European colonialism to the Ancient World by theorizing that Ptolemaic imperialism was motivated by the wish to secure raw materials for the "motherland".[14] A conscious policy of "defensive imperialism" has also been attributed to the Ptolemies.[15] As Sheila Ager dryly noted, "for a state that was interested primarily in security rather than aggrandisement, the Ptolemaic regime was extraordinarily active outside its own borders."[16] We may add that for a polity whose territorial ambitions allegedly were limited, the Ptolemaic dynasty propagated a remarkably universalistic ideology.[17] A notable critic of perceived views is Céline Marquaille, who wrote that "the interests of the Ptolemies outside Egypt are often observed and analysed as separate from their activities in Egypt [...]. The administrations of Syria or Cyprus are seldom considered as part of a Ptolemaic state, and are instead often included in the study of Ptolemaic foreign policy".[18]

A related approach has been to view Egypt itself as a colonized country.[19] But the image of native Egyptians suppressed by malicious Greeks seems to have been inspired rather directly by the modern colonial experience, too.[20]

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established elites (Strootman 2017b). The early Ptolemies likely saw themselves not as Greeks but as Macedonians. On the court as a center for the production of "imperial culture", see Strootman 2014d and 2017a.

13 E.g. Peremans and Van 't Dack 1956; Bagnall 1976; Beyer-Rotthoff 1993.

14 Braunert 1964, 91–94; a similar argument is made by Beyer-Rotthoff 1993, 206–207.

15 Most influential in this respect have been Rostovtzeff 1941, 334, and Will 1979, 153–208; still Vandorpe 2014, 169–171.

16 Ager 2003, 38.

17 I refer the reader to my earlier publications on the universalistic pretensions of the Ptolemaic and Seleukid empires: Strootman 2007, 353–357 and *passim*; 2010a; 2014a; 2014b; 2017a, 115–146. Also see now Petrovic 2014; Burstein 2016.

18 Marquaille 2008, 39.

19 E.g. Will 1984, 41–42.

20 See e.g. Will 1986. Against this view notably Bagnall 1997, criticizing the conceptualization of Egypt as a colonized country; Bagnall's view is defended by Manning 2009, who cautions not to "[analyze] Ptolemaic state formation through the lens of the nineteenth-century nation state's colonial experience or twentieth-century postcolonial reactions to colonization" (p. 36). See more recently the excellent treatment of Greco-Egyptian relations by Fischer-Bovet 2016, showing that Ptolemaic elite culture in Egypt was not exclusive but "cumulative": in addition to local identities, elite members gained prestige through their association with the monarchy and the court, as expressed by their participation in specific dynastic festivals and rituals.

Thus, the model of the bounded European nation state has profoundly informed modern interpretations of Ptolemaic history.[21]

In this chapter, I approach the Ptolemaic polity as an organization of the imperial type—not as a country *with* an empire. The view of premodern empire in recent literature has become less and less state-like; instead, fluidity and plurality are believed to be characteristic of empire.[22] The empire paradigm has the benefit that it encompasses a wide variety of forms of control, negotiation, exploitation, and cooperation.

I furthermore argue that Ptolemaic imperialism was seaborne: its main routes of communication were maritime, and its imperial policy aimed first of all at securing sea routes through the control of harbors. This does not imply that the Ptolemies did not control territory in Egypt, Asia Minor and Syria; but as with most premodern imperial leaders, their main concern was with the control of people and resources rather than with territory per se.

My focus will be on the heyday of the empire in the third century, under its first four rulers, Ptolemy I Soter (323–282), Ptolemy II Philadelphos (282–246), Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–222), and Ptolemy IV Philopator (222–204). In the reign of Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204–180), Ptolemaic naval dominance collapsed when Seleukid armies overwhelmed the coastal cities of Asia Minor and the Levant between 202 and 195 BCE. The Ptolemies survived this crisis partly because of a timely Roman intervention in the Aegean, but their empire was now limited to Cyrenaica, Egypt and Cyprus. A generation later, the Seleukids attacked also the remaining territories in Egypt and Cyprus, and again Roman intervention saved the Ptolemaic dynasty. However, when the Seleukid Empire itself started to fall apart after ca. 150, the Ptolemies immediately attempted to reclaim their place as a great power (though now in a world increasingly dominated by two new imperial powers: the Romans and the Parthians).

The Origins of Ptolemaic Manpower

The Ptolemaic polity in the third century was not a territorially defined state because the dynasty, and not territory, was central to its functioning and ideology. The dynasty sat on top of aspects of Egyptian society, and many other societies as well. If we define the Ptolemaic polity not as a territorial state but as an organization aiming at creating routine access to resources, then Egypt

21 There was exploitation, to be sure, but the exploited and exploiting were not neatly divided into two ethnic groups.

22 See the Introduction to this volume.

certainly was not the only province of importance. Egypt's high agricultural production of course was proverbial, and fundamental to Ptolemaic rule was also the distribution of Egyptian farmland among the followers of the dynasty in order to secure their loyalty.[23] But the Nile Valley was not a source of metals, nor of gold and silver, nor timber for ship building. All that had to be obtained elsewhere: in Nubia, the Red Sea region, Libya, and the Levant—*not* for the benefit of Egypt, but for the benefit of the dynasty and its entourage. For while it is undeniable that Egypt lacks metals, wood, and other raw materials, and it is very likely that the Ptolemies therefore obtained these elsewhere, there exists to my knowledge no evidence for the common assumption that the Ptolemies systematically brought such goods in large quantities into Egypt proper. As a source of military manpower, Egypt was important (and probably well before the Battle of Raphia in 217). But other regions were important too. While troops were also raised in Libya and the southern Levant, in the third century the Ptolemies' principal source for personnel of all sorts was the Aegean.

Under the Ptolemies, Egypt became a locus for pan-Mediterranean migration. Volume X of the *Prosopographia Ptolemaica*, concerned with foreign ethnonyms in Egypt, reveals a bewildering array of ethnicities and places of origin that defies modern ideas about ancient state boundaries (and modern ideas about ethnicity as well).[24] Most strongly represented among the attested migrant peoples are individuals self-identifying as Macedonian (Μακεδών/Μακέτα) or "of Macedonian descent" (Μακεδών τῆς ἐπιγονῆς); as Thracian (Θρᾶιξ and Θρᾶιξ τῆς ἐπιγονῆς); Greek (Ἕλλην, *Hellēn*);[25] Cretan,[26] Cyrenian;[27] Arab and Judean.[28] The precise meaning of these ethnics is not always clear; *Hellēn* for instance is used primarily as a fiscal category in administrative texts and does not necessarily refer to actual migrants from the Aegean.[29] We are on firmer ground, however, with those residents in Egypt who identified themselves by their cities of origin: the majority of these associated themselves with

23 The Macedonians and Greeks who were given allotments of land in Egypt often did not work these lands themselves, and the actual farmers remained predominantly Egyptians (Bingen 2007, 104–121; on land tenure in Ptolemaic Egypt in general consult Manning 2003).

24 La'da 2002; on the place of minorities in Egyptian societies, see Thompson 2011.

25 Also as Demotic *Wynn.w*/*Ḥ3w-nbw.t*, and the interesting variant "Hellenomemphite" (La'da 2002, 48–70); on Greek settlers in Egypt, see Bingen 2007, 94–103.

26 Κρής; Κρῆσσα; Κρητικός and Κρής τῆς ἐπιγονῆς.

27 Κυρηναῖος, Κυρηναία; and Dem. *Grnys*.

28 La'da 2002, *ad loc*.

29 Clarysse 1985; cf. Clarysse and Thompson 2006 (I am grateful to Christelle Fischer-Bovet for these references).

cities in the Aegean region, particularly (and perhaps surprisingly) mainland Greece. The city that is mentioned most often in the papyri, is Athens, followed by Miletos and Kos.[30] Cities in the Levant, Sicily, Italy, and the Black Sea region are also well represented. Among the migrant populations of Egypt we furthermore find representatives of most of the peoples of Asia Minor and the Balkans, as well as peoples from African countries south of Egypt, to wit Nubia, Kush, Blemmye, and Ethiopia.[31]

The relative abundance of evidence from Egypt—most of all papyri—should not lead to the conclusion that Egypt was the sole target of migratory movements. Apart from Alexandria, the country may not even have been the principal recipient of migrants in the third century. There was only one major city foundation in Egypt proper, Ptolemais in the Thebaid, which had a more or less Greek identity (in contrast to nearby Thebes). By contrast, numerous settlements were established by the Ptolemies and their agents in southern Asia Minor, on Cyprus, and on the Red Sea coast;[32] and military garrisons were installed in existing cities particularly in Asia Minor and on the Aegean islands.

Similarly, the Ptolemaic army was not a national, but a multi-ethnic, imperial one.[33] The majority of the infantry of the line, the phalanx, in the campaigning armies that were sent to Palestine to fight the Seleukids, seems to have been recruited among "native" Egyptians and Greco-Macedonian settlers in Egypt, perhaps with the addition of Aegean "mercenaries". But often units were identified by other ethnic denominators, in particular cavalry hipparchies. In the third century, soldiers stationed in Egypt could be identified as Macedonians, Greeks, Thessalians, Arabs, Judeans, Thracians, Cretans, Galatians, Libyans and Mysians.[34] However, ethnic units were never ethnically "pure", as they were

30 La'da 2002 *ad loc.*; cf. Table 7.1 in Stefanou 2013.

31 La'da 2002, 11, 297, and 307–311.

32 Mueller 2006; cf. Cohen 1995 and 2006.

33 For the Battle of Raphia—a massive confrontation between Ptolemaic and Seleukid armies, fought in southern Palestine in 217—Polybios (5.80.3-13) lists as part of the Ptolemaic field army 25,000 Macedonians, more than 20,000 Egyptians, 3,000 Libyans, 6,000 Thracians and Galatians, 3.000 Cretans and 10,000 mercenary troops freshly recruited in the Aegean, plus more than 3,000 regulars serving in various royal guard units. On the Ptolemaic army, see recently Scheuble-Reiter 2012; Fischer-Bovet 2014; Véïsse and Wackenier 2014.

34 Fischer-Bovet 2014, 191–195 with tables 5.3 and 5.4 on p. 178–183. A special category were the *Makedones* and *Persai*: although perhaps originally real ethnic indicators—the latter are often attested as *Persēs tēs epigonēs* ("of Persian descent")—these terms in the second century came to designate entirely non-ethnic privileged tax classes connected to military service (Fischer-Bovet 2014, 178–191).

open to members of other groups.[35] But neither can it be assumed that these ethnics denoted no more than a specific type of armament or tactics: service in the military was a major incentive for migration movements across the entire eastern Mediterranean, and such units were likely composed for a large part of (descendants of) migrants.[36] But the ethnics attested on the papyri concern only troops stationed in Egypt; far less is known about the ethnic compositions of Ptolemaic garrisons and governor's armies in the Levant and Asia Minor.

The royal court and the higher levels of the naval and military administration were filled mainly from cities and tribes in the Aegean region.[37] These people often identified as "Greek". In the Hellenistic period, Greekness became in certain contexts a non-ethnic, supra-local identity that could also to some extent be adopted by non-Greek elite persons beyond the Aegean, e.g. Judeans or, in the Seleukid Empire, Babylonians.[38] Greek identity in the Hellenistic world thus often denoted an association with empire and court. This imperial "Hellenism", in its various local forms, connected culturally and linguistically diverse elites horizontally while at the same time distancing them vertically from their local rivals and inferiors. The royal court at Alexandria, through the patronage of art and literature, was instrumental in the creation of this cosmopolitan culture that was neither Greek nor Egyptian but "Ptolemaic".[39]

A Seaborne Network Empire

The Ptolemaic empire was basically a dynamic and varied patchwork of friends, allied cities, friendly kings, fortified strongholds held by garrisons, and more. Sometimes larger regions were more or less brought under direct military control, for instance Cyprus, Palestine, Lykia and Karia. But even in the

35 Clarysse and Fischer-Bovet 2012, 27–28; cf. Stefanou 2013, 131. Comparison with the Seleukid practice of ethnic regiments suggests that what most of all created *esprit de corps* was a shared commitment to a specific deity and cult associated with the specific ethnic identity (Houle 2015).

36 Stefanou 2013.

37 O'Neil 2006; Strootman 2007, 124–129. Although the Ptolemies co-opted Egyptian elites to access local resources, native Egyptians only rarely entered the higher echelons of the court and the army (Rowlandson 2008; Moyer 2011b; Strootman 2017b).

38 Strootman 2007, 21–22, 214–216, 354–356, and 2010b; cf. *id.* 2014d, 9–11, 163–164; accepted by Bang 2012, and followed by Haubold 2016. Also see Fischer-Bovet 2016, emphasizing not the "Greekness" of translocal elite culture, but participation in rituals connected to the monarchy (cf. above, n. 20).

39 On the creation and emanation of imperial culture at the Ptolemaic court, see now Strootman 2017a.

core province of Egypt, such control was always for a large part indirect, based on self-government left to indigenous elites in return for revenue and support.[40] The empire was created more through the agency of individuals than by means of formalized institutions.[41] Cohesion to some extent was achieved by the empire-wide promotion of dynastic cult and by the consistent use of dynastic and religious symbols on imperial coinages.

Katja Mueller in her important study of Ptolemaic settlements described the empire as "a conglomerate of regions".[42] Hierarchized groupings of settlements of varying sizes interacted to form more or less coherent regions.[43] These multiple Ptolemaic spheres of influence were tied together through a closely guarded web of sea routes. It could be maintained that the Ptolemies needed a strong fleet to guard the many cities under their protection. But this would make the Ptolemies look more peaceful than they actually were. Considering their preference for bringing harbor cities into their orbit, it likely was the other way around. The creation and consolidation of a high-density maritime infrastructure was vital for the expansionist Ptolemaic imperial project.[44] Control of harbors was required for acquiring the naval strength needed to claim imperial supremacy in the eastern Mediterranean. Getzel Cohen rightly noted that,

> If we can say [...] that the Seleucids built many of their colonies to reinforce their major roadways, then we can point out that the Ptolemies founded or refounded a large number of harbor towns to serve the needs of their fleet and to secure coastal communications.[45]

Based on a detailed inventory cited by Athenaios, it is generally accepted that the main war fleet of Ptolemy II was considerable, comprising about 250 standard oared attack ships (penteres, triremes and smaller ships) and about 100 heavier vessels, including a number of those legendary Hellenistic "super galleys" ("twenties" and "thirties" for instance).[46] Athenaios furthermore claims

40 Clarysse 1999; Huß 1999; Gorre 2009; Pfeiffer 2010; Weber 2012.

41 Strootman 2007; 2014d.

42 Mueller 2006, 83.

43 *Ibid.* 41–55.

44 The term "high-density maritime infrastructure" was borrowed from Arnaud 2014, 161–162.

45 Cohen 1983, 63.

46 Ath. 5.303d (5.36.11–21); cf. Murray 2012, 188–191. With reference to a personal communication of John Grainger, Murray (p. 188 n. 51) adds that Athenaios' 17 *penteres* ("fives", perhaps better known by their Latin name as *quinquiremes*; I included them in the total of ca. 250 "standard" galleys) should be higher because this type of ship had

that at least another 4,000 ships were scattered over naval bases throughout the eastern Mediterranean. The latter figure seems rather high but may include transport ships or merchant vessels (but even then, the number is rather high). There also was without doubt a war fleet in the Red Sea but nothing is known about its strength. All this means that in the third century, maintaining a fleet of warships was one of the main expenses of the imperial household, and that the Ptolemaic polity was in fact far more militarized than is commonly assumed.[47]

The idea, put forward most influentially by Lionel Casson,[48] that in the Ancient Mediterranean seafaring was not possible during the Winter season (mid-November to early March), and considerably reduced in the Fall and Spring, is no longer tenable. The seas of the Mediterranean, though certainly dangerous, offered relatively good opportunities for communication and exchange the year round.[49] As Pascal Arnaud pointed out, ancient seafaring was not just coastal, or "tramping"; ships regularly crossed the open sea.[50] Most of all, sea travel was a *fast* way to travel. The Ptolemies' preoccupation with maritime networks is apparent from their encouragement of the study of world geography at the Mouseion of Alexandria, and the exploration of sea routes in the Indian Ocean.[51]

There were roughly three ways in which the Ptolemies tried to bring sea routes under their control: (1) by negotiating alliances with coastal cities; (2) by taking coastal cities by force; and (3) through the establishment of settlements in coastal regions and the construction of new harbors. The *philoi* (royal "friends", courtiers) in charge of these foundations seem to have acted

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become the standard "workhorse" of the major fleets of that time, perhaps approximately 300. The term "super galley" was coined by Casson 1969. On Ptolemaic naval strength in the third century, see also Erskine 2013, 83 with further bibliography in nn. 4–6. For the Egyptian contribution to the Ptolemaic fleet see Van 't Dack and Hauben 1978.

47 On the costs of the fleet, see below. As Christelle Fischer-Bovet ponted out to me, it is in fact difficult—if not impossible—to distinguish between land and naval forces as separate organizational units in any of the Helenistic empires.

48 E.g. Casson 1971.

49 Morton 2001; Arnaud 2005; Beresford 2013.

50 Arnaud 2011.

51 Habicht 2013. In the first half of the third century, the Ptolemaic admiral Timosthenes of Rhodes circumnavigated the Mediterranean and put his findings in a work of ten books entitled *On Harbors*; see Prontera 2013, 208, also showing how the geographic and cartographic studies of "court scholars" such as Eratosthenes closely reflected Ptolemaic geopolitical interests (but see now also Rathmann 2016, showing that for ancient geographers the Mediterranean was not a specific field of interest; instead, they aimed at describing the world in its entirety).

as private entrepreneurs empowered by the dynasty rather than as officials carrying out orders, and there probably were significant benefits for them in organizing colonization.[52]

In her study of Ptolemaic expansion in the time of Ptolemy III, Brigitte Beyer-Rotthoff identifies around forty autonomous Mediterranean ports that served as bases for the Ptolemaic fleet.[53] Most of these were located in the Levant and the Aegean. There were for instance Ptolemaic garrisons for longer or shorter periods of time at strategic locations such as Gaza, Sidon, Tyre, Thera, Halikarnassos, Xanthos, and Methana. In addition to these, the Ptolemies and their agents created new settlements along the southern coast of Asia Minor to consolidate their control of the sea route between Cyprus and Rhodes. Literary sources have recorded 28 settlements with the Ptolemaic dynastic names Arsinoe, Berenike, Philadelphia, and Ptolemais.[54] All in all, the Ptolemies in the third century controlled a total of ca. 75 harbors throughout the eastern Mediterranean, about 30 of which were garrisoned.[55] This widespread distribution of naval stations covered an enormous area, stretching from Berenike in present-day Libya to Maroneia near the Hellespont and another Berenike near the mouth of the Red Sea.

The central hub in this imperial network was the port city Alexandria, with its two large harbors, a commercial and a military one. The Ancient qualification of this city as Alexandria-*by*-Egypt (not *in* Egypt) is apt.[56] The principal dynastic and religious center of Ptolemaic Egypt was Memphis.[57] Ancient writers report that under favorable weather conditions it could be a mere 4.5 days

52 See e.g. below, n. 97. Another, notorious, form of imperial entrepreneurship, tax farming, was widespread, too: cf. e.g. *P.Cair. Zen.* I 59037 (Karia, 258/7 BCE); *P.Hib.* I 66 (Egypt, 228 BCE); *P.Tebt.* I 40 (Egypt, 117 BCE); and the illuminating account given by Josephus of the mafia practices of a tax farmer in Idumea (*AJ* 12.167–185, cf. Zayadine 2005; Pfeiffer 2010; the episode is very difficult to date, see e.g. Schwartz 1998). On private entrepreneurs as agents of empire, see also Van den Eijnde and Antunes in this volume.

53 Beyer-Rotthoff 1993, 214–222; for a short overview see Peremans and Van 't Dack 1956, 14–16, and comprehensibly Bagnall 1976.

54 Winter 2011.

55 Listed in Table 6.3 in Murray 2012, 195–196, based on data provided by Bagnall 1976 and Grainger 2010; the list omits inland communities and harbors created or dominated in East Africa. There is now new evidence for a Ptolemaic garrison at Xanthos (Baker and Thériault 2013; cf. Cavaliers and Des Courtils 2013).

56 Gr. Ἀλεξάνδρεια ἡ πρὸς Αἰγύπτῳ; Lat. *Alexandreia ad Aegyptum*. The designation "Alexandria *in* Egypt" encountered less frequently in Greek and Latin texts of the Roman period (instances gathered and discussed in Bell 1946) may be associated with the fact that Alexandria became the administrative center of the Roman province of Egypt (for Rome by that time had taken over Alexandria's status as capital of the world).

57 Thompson 1988.

sailing from Alexandria to Ephesos, and less than 4 days to Rhodes; even with unfavorable winds, the journey from Alexandria to Cyprus along the Levantine coast could be made within 7 days.[58] These travel times probably were recorded because they were records of sorts; but the probable *average* speed, as estimated by Casson on the basis of these and other sources, still suggest that in terms of travel time Asia Minor was closer to Alexandria than Upper Egypt (ca. 7 days to Cyprus; 7–10 days to Rhodes).[59] To rephrase that slightly more rhetorically: from Alexandria, Thebes in Greece could easier be reached than Thebes in Egypt.[60]

Alexandria has been deemed a purely "Greek" city in the past. This image emerges notably from P. M. Fraser's monumental three-volume *Ptolemaic Alexandria*.[61] But at least since the turn of the millennium, it has also become a commonplace to present Alexandria as an "Egyptian" city,[62] or at least as a city that is culturally located "between Greece and Egypt".[63] Such views do no justice to the cultural and ethnic complexities of imperial Alexandria. The Ptolemies themselves consciously shaped the city through monuments, institutions and public rituals as the symbolic center of the earth—a cosmopolis where

58 Ach. Tat., 5.15.1, 17.1; Diod. 3.33. Luc., *Nav.* 7. Rhodes was the Ptolemies' gateway to Asia Minor and the Aegean. Rather than following the coast, ships sailing between Alexandria and Rhodes took a direct route straight across the open sea—a voyage of 7 to 10 days on average and one of the "golden sea routes of the Mediterranean" (Casson 1971, 287; cf. Gabrielsen 2013, 69–70; for the travel time, see above). As Gabrielsen reminds us, emblematic of the nearness of Rhodes to Alexandria "is perhaps the fact that the small island right before the entrance to Alexandria's artificial harbour carried the name of Antirrhodos" (Gabrielsen 2013, 69; the name is attested in Strabo 17.1.9). The Ptolemies also controlled a number of harbors on Crete (Bagnall 1976, 117–123).

59 Casson 1951, 145; the average speed of seagoing vessels in Antiquity, as calculated by Casson, was 75–100 nautical miles per day (ca. 140–185 km).

60 The distance between Alexandria and Egyptian Thebes (= Waset, now Luxor) is around 530 miles (ca. 850 km) following the Nile, that is, a foot journey of approximately 30 days (Google Maps gives a total of ca. 175 walking hours for this route). The journey could also be made by river boat; a quick round of traveler's blogs on the Internet learned me that sailing the Nile *downstream* on a felucca from Thebes to Memphis (still some 140 miles away from Alexandria) would take approximately two weeks during inundation season when the water level is highest but longer in the dryer seasons.

61 Fraser 1972.

62 E.g. Pfrommer 1999 locates Alexandria "im Schatten der Pyramiden" ("in the Shadow of the Pyramids") and shows on its cover an image, not of Alexandria, but of the Pyramids of Giza, ca. 125 miles away (the content of the book is more nuanced). Bowman's characterization of Alexandria as "Queen of the Mediterranean" probably would have pleased the Ptolemies (1996, 203).

63 Harris and Ruffini 2004.

the world converged.[64] Centuries later, Dio Chrysostom (32.36) still echoed Ptolemaic propaganda when he wrote that Alexandria "is situated, as it were, at the uniting center of the whole earth, of even its most far away nations, as if the whole city is an *agora*, bringing together all men into one place, displaying them to one another and, as far as possible, making them one people."

From the Red Sea to the Black Sea: the Empire in Its Heyday

In a much-debated passage, the Greek historian Polybios (second century BCE) outlined the Ptolemaic Empire at its greatest extent under Ptolemy III:

> [The Ptolemies], far from taking little interest in foreign affairs, had generally given them precedence over those of Egypt itself. For being masters of Koile Syria and Cyprus, they were a constant threat to the kings of Syria (*sc*. the Seleukids), both by land and sea; and they were also in a commanding position regarding the princes of Asia [Minor], as well as the islands, through their possession of the most splendid cities, strongholds, and harbors all along the seacoast from Pamphylia to the Hellespont and the district round Lysimacheia. Moreover they were favorably placed for an attack upon Thrace and Macedonia from their possession of Ainos, Maroneia, and more distant cities still.[65]

This passage is sometimes quoted in support of a formal disconnection of "Egypt" from its "overseas possessions". But Polybios' claim that the dynasty neglected the latter after the death of Ptolemy III in 222 is a false one.[66] Polybios, whose Mediterranean bias also gave rise to his distorted image of the Seleukids as "kings of Syria",[67] notoriously omits not only Cyrenaica (the coast of present-day Libya) but moreover fails to mention Ptolemaic activities in the Red Sea and towards the Horn of Africa. On the other hand, Polybios' statement that the Ptolemies dominated the coasts from Pamphylia to the Hellespont is corroborated by epigraphic evidence attesting Ptolemaic military presence in Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lykia, and Karia.[68] The best way to see this passage then, is

64 Buraselis 1993, 259; Strootman 2007, 213–214; 2011b.

65 Polyb. 5.34.2–9 (Loeb translation with minor adjustments). On this passage, see e.g. Peremans and Van 't Dack 1956; Marquaille 2008, 40–41; Erskine 2013.

66 Erskine 2013.

67 Strootman 2019a.

68 Bagnall 1976, 80–116. The evidence for Ptolemaic rule in Pamphylia was recently re-evaluated by Meadows and Thonemann 2013, 223. On the basis of two inscriptions,

as a description of Ptolemaic imperialism in specifically the Aegean, the region that Polybios was interested in most of all.

With his incomplete list of subject lands, Polybios selectively reflects Ptolemaic self-presentation. In the seventeenth *Idyll* of the court poet Theokritos—an encomium to Ptolemy II, in which the king is described as a heroic warrior who creates universal peace and prosperity through his victories with divine support—the Mediterranean empire is described:

> He has taken a share of Phoenicia, Arabia,
> Of Syria, Libya and the dark Ethiopians;
> he has the command of the whole of Pamphylia,
> of Kilikia, Lykia, and Karia's troops;
> he even has charge of the isles of the Cyclades,
> thanks to his navy's control of the sea.
> The entire ocean and all the land with its rushing rivers
> all bow to King Ptolemy's supreme rule.
> Great armies of horsemen are clustered around him,
> great hosts of foot-soldiers in burnished bronze arms.[69]

The Aegean was vitally important to the imperial endeavors of successive Ptolemaic rulers. This was the region were during the third century the Ptolemies likely threw most of their military and financial resources at. But they were not the only ones: the Seleukids and Antigonids were active in this region as well. We will return to the contested Aegean and overlapping imperial networks in the next section, after a brief overview of the extent of the Ptolemaic thalassocracy (Figure. 5.1).

Let us begin with the westernmost part of the empire: Cyrenaica, a cluster of cities on the coast of present-day Libya.[70] The area was controled for some time by a vassal king, Magas, a rather unruly chap who came under Seleukid

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one from Xanthos and one from Alexandria (*TAM* II 263 = *OGIS* 91 and *I.Alex.Ptol.* 27 = *OGIS* 99), Bagnall 1976, 110, plausibly argues that after the conquests of Antiochos III in western Asia Minor in 197, Lykian communities retained links with the court at Alexandria; cf. Lanciers 2017, who is doubtful that these documents proof the existence of diplomatic ties.

69 Theokritos, *Idyll* 17.95–104 (transl. Hunter); on this poem, see Hunter 2003; Heerink 2010; Strootman 2017a, 123–125. A now lost victory inscription from Adulis on the Red Sea lists lands under the suzerainty of Ptolemy III: Egypt, Libya, Syria, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Lykia, Karia, the Cyclades, Kilikia, Pamphylia, Ionia, the Hellespont, and Thrace (*OGIS* 54; cf. Fauvelle-Aymard 2009).

70 Bagnall 1976, 25–37.

FIGURE 5.1 The Ptolemaic World
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influence and turned against his half-brother Ptolemy II.[71] But the area was soon pacified and a Lybiarch, or military governor of Libya, is attested for the year 203.[72] In the Western Desert, the Ptolemies brought under their control

71 Hölbl 2001, 38–40. On the dynastic intricacies of this conflict see van Oppen 2015a; McAuley 2016.

72 Marquaille 2008, 44. This is corroborated by epigraphic evidence from Libya for the presence of a *stratēgos*, Philon, between 185 and 180 (*SEG* IX 55).

five major oases (Siwa, Bahariya, Farafra, Dakhleh and Kharga) and thereby controlled the Saharan trade networks running through them.[73] With the acquisition of Cyrenaica and the Western Desert the early Ptolemies expanded the area of Macedonian domination beyond the original conquests of Alexander the Great.

The same can be said about the region to the south of Egypt. It was most of all Stanley Burstein who insisted that the Middle Nile Region in modern Sudan (Ancient Nubia and Meroë) should be treated as part of the "globalizing" Hellenistic World.[74] The region held much of strategic and economic interest for the Ptolemies. Items to be traded or captured there included gold, ivory, elephants, and slaves. Ptolemy I may have campaigned south of the First Cataract (Aswan) when he was still satrap of Egypt.[75] Under his son, Ptolemy II, a more concerted effort was made to expand into the region of Lower Nubia.[76] The region was lost again during the so-called Great Revolt in the Thebaid (206/5–186),[77] but in the reigns of Ptolemy VI and VIII (180–145 and 154–116), Lower Nubia was again firmly in Ptolemaic hands;[78] Kleopatra VII (51–30) still claimed suzerainty over Nubia and the entire Red Sea.[79]

The northern Red Sea coasts were incorporated by diplomatic and military means,[80] and by the establishment of harbors.[81] The best known and perhaps most important settlement was Berenike.[82] Farther to the south,

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73 Gill 2016.

74 Burstein 1993; 2008. For the region's history, see Török 1997; for artistic developments resulting from interactions with the Ptolemaic, and later Roman north Török 2011. Fundamental for the sources on Ptolemaic relations with the south is still Préaux 1952.

75 Burstein 2014 and 2015; Manning 2011, 310, is more cautious. On the Ptolemies' southern frontier Locher 1999.

76 Hölbl 2001, 55–58; cf. Manning 2011, 310–311, pointing out that Ptolemy II's major campaign of ca. 175/4 "established a 'small world' network that re-linked what we might call the Egypto-Nubian "interaction sphere" via new Ptolemaic nodes" (p. 310; for the date Török 1997, 395 n. 284).

77 Hölbl 2001, 153–159; on this and other indigenous revolts against the Ptolemies, see Véïsse 2004.

78 Mueller 2006, 162.

79 As may be surmised from the list of languages allegedly spoken by the queen at ceremonial occasions (Plut., *Ant.* 27.3–4; for the ideological implications, see Strootman 2010a).

80 Including actions against Nabataean "pirates" who likewise sought to control Red Sea trade routes (Durand 2012).

81 Sidebotham 2012, 1042. Cohen 2006, 305–343, identifies 17 Ptolemaic settlements in the Red Sea basin.

82 Sidebotham 2011.

contacts were established with the kingdoms of southwest Arabia and the Horn of Africa, regions notable for the production of expensive aromatics.[83] Captains working under Ptolemaic flag explored sea routes to India and Ceylon, and loose diplomatic contacts were established with local princes on the west coast of the Indian subcontinent.[84] Several written sources claim there was a Ptolemaic settlement on the island Socotra (Dioskorides) in the Indian Ocean,[85] and the at least Ptolemy II Philadelphos maintained diplomatic contacts with Maurya India.[86] To be sure, the Indian Ocean trade system of the Hellenistic period—now often seen as an early form of globalization—was not created by the Ptolemies; it predated them and was run by local merchants.[87] But agents of the Ptolemies did try to tap into this rapidly expanding system of interaction, and tried to monopolize the spice trade to Egypt and the Mediterranean.[88] In doing so, they encouraged the further development of connectivity in this region. This likely incited clashes with the Seleukids, whose political and commercial interests extended through the Persian Gulf to southern Arabia as well.[89]

One of the aims of Ptolemaic seaborne activities to the Horn of Africa was obtaining war elephants to fight the Seleukids in Syria and Palestine.[90] This was facilitated by the foundation of stations, sometimes fortified, on the coast of present-day Sudan and Eritrea by imperial officials or freelance entrepreneurs.[91] Colonizing activities have been recorded by Strabo for the reigns of Ptolemy II, III, and IV.[92] The elephant hunting expeditions for obvious reasons

83 Kitchen 2001; on the so-called spice routes in Antiquity, see Keay 2006.

84 Sidebotham 2012, 1042–1043; Habicht 2013.

85 Cohen 2006, 325–326.

86 Rock Edicts of Aśoka 13.27; Solinus 52.3 records the name (Dionysios) of Philadelphos' representative in India.

87 Seland 2016.

88 *P.Tebt.* I 35 267. On the overland route to Egypt and the Mediterranean, see Catanzeriti 2008.

89 Salles 2005.

90 Scullard 1974, 126–133; Burstein 2008. This, by the way, is an interesting example of the processes of proto-globalization associated with the Hellenistic period, for the Seleukids on their part brought elephants from India to the Mediterranean to fight the Ptolemies.

91 Strabo 16.4.5. For the settlements and their connection to the elephant hunt, see Mueller 2006, 151–157. Few of these settlements has been excavated or even precisely located (Sidebotham 2012, 1042; for a comprehensive discussion of the written sources consult Cohen 2006, 305–343). The expeditions likely involved the participation of local elephant hunters (Manning 2011, 310–311).

92 Strabo 16.4.7–15, corroborated by contemporaneous papyri and inscriptions; see the useful overview in Mueller 2006, 154–155 (Table 4.1).

have attracted much scholarly interest. But as Mueller reminds us, the ca. twenty larger and smaller settlements (including small sanctuaries) cannot have been merely by-products of elephant hunting.[93] They were instruments of imperial expansion. Colonization of the southern coasts meant also the establishment or appropriation of a network of inland roads connecting these coastal ports with the Nile.[94] Though often understood as commercial roads, the costs involved in maintaining and protecting the desert routes must have been very high.[95]

Moving north to the Levant, the first Ptolemaic stronghold we encounter is the fortified border town of Gaza in southern Palestine. The many ports along the coast of Palestine, Phoenicia and Kilikia, wrested from the Antigonids and later the Seleukids, were important bases for the fleet, as well as centers for the construction of ships.[96] The importance of these coastal regions—which the Ptolemies and Seleukids frequently fought over—is revealed by the presence of military governors with substantial armed forces at their disposal. The Levantine region was divided into several military districts.[97] Constantly threatened by the Seleukids, Ptolemaic hegemony in the southern Levant extended for strategic reasons to the inland as well, to Idumea, Judea and Transjordan.[98]

The center of this part of the empire surely was Cyprus. The island had been a crossroads of sea routes since time immemorial,[99] and it was of huge

93 Mueller 2006, 151. The complex motivations, and development through time, of the Ptolemaic colonization of the south is still poorly understood and warrants more research (and, I would suggest, the notions of private entrepreneurship and local participation could be helpful to look at the sources afresh).

94 Gates-Foster 2006.

95 Henning 2003.

96 For the incorporation of the Phoenician cities into the Ptolemaic imperial system, see now Aliquot and Bonnet 2015. Grainger 1991 gives an overview of the cities and their historical evolution in Hellenistic times. The sources are discussed in Bagnall 1976, 11–24. The bibliography on Ptolemaic rule in Palestine, Judea and the Transjordan region is vast; see recently e.g. Gera 1997; Grabbe 2011; Pfeiffer 2011; Gorre and Honigman 2013.

97 For the Ptolemaic organization of Syria and Phoenicia, see Bagnall 1976, 11–24. A governor (*stratēgos*) of Kilikia, Thraseas, is attested in a decree of Arsinoe-in-Kilikia honoring his father, the *stratēgos* Aëtos of Aspendos, who had founded the settlement between 278 and 253 (*SEG* XXXIX 1426; Habicht and Jones 1989); cf. Bagnall 1976, 114–116. The same Thraseas became governor of Syria and Phoenicia sometime after 217 (*SEG* XXXIX 1596b), later to be succeeded by his own son, Ptolemaios. On this dynasty of *philoi*, see Gera 1997, 28–34.

98 Bringmann 2005, 76–77.

99 See Michaelides, Kassianidou, Merillees 2009, tracing the exchanges between Cyprus and Egypt from the Third Millennium BCE to Late Antiquity.

geostrategic significance for the empire since the Ptolemaic conquest in 313.[100] This is apparent from the high rank of the Ptolemaic courtiers who were active on the island after 217, when the first *stratēgos* of Cyprus, Pelops son of Pelops, appears in our sources.[101] Before that time, the Ptolemies exerted authority indirectly through local client rulers,[102] some of whom may have been bound to the imperial house by kinship ties.[103] On Cyprus, no less than in Egypt, the Ptolemies conducted an active "religious policy", introducing dynastic cults and promoting the association of local deities with imperial ones, especially the threefold syncretism of Aphrodite, Isis and Ptolemaic queens.[104] Ptolemy II regularly visited the island together with his entourage of *philoi*, and later rulers are also known to have stayed there. Cyprus was a base for the fleet, and Marquaille may be right in boldly stating that he island was "a royal domain [...] on a scale similar to Egypt."[105]

The Contested Aegean

It has in the past been assumed that the Hellenistic world saw a consciously maintained "balance of power" between three "kingdoms" that in modern scholarship are often made to resemble European states. The creation of this

100 The island was lost to the Antigonids in 306 but reincorporated into the Ptolemaic Empire in 295/4. On the Ptolemaic administration and military Bagnall 1976, 38–79.

101 Bagnall 1976, 252–253. Kallikles, son of Kallikles of Alexandria, was ἀρχισωματοφύλαξ ("archbodyguard", *i.e.* a person close to the king) and Secretary of the Household Cavalry; he is honored with a statue by the *politai* of Kourion (*SEG* LVIII 1744, ll. 1–3; 163–154 BCE) but may have acted on behalf of that *polis* at court in Alexandria. Certainly present on the island was Theodoros, commander in chief of the Ptolemaic forces on Cyprus, who was "archpriest of the island" (ἀ[ρχι]ερέως τῶν κατὰ τὴν νῆσον; i.e. overseer of the royal cults) and bore the title of Kinsman of the King (συνγενοῦς το[ῦ β]ασιλέως) (OGIS 155, ll. 2–5; 140–131 BCE); one of his predecessors as governor, Seleukos son of Bithys, also was a Relative of the King and like Theodoros "general and admiral" as well as "archpriest of the island" (*I.Kourion* 45, ll. 1–3; 142–131 BCE; I owe these references to Benjamin Wieland). For a complete overview of governors of Cyprus from 217 to 40, see Bagnall 1976, 252–262.

102 On the persistence of city kingship on Cyprus in the third century, see Fourrier 2015.

103 This at least was the case with the royal house of Soli; see van Oppen 2015b.

104 Papantoniou 2009; cf. *id.* 2012 (*n.v.*), and Fulińska 2012. Also see Dumke and Pfeijffer 2014, discussing how the religious center of Ptolemaic Cyprus, the sanctuary of Aphrodite at Palaiopaphos, served as contact zone between members of the imperial court and representatives of local elites; cf Barbantani 2005 on the assimilation of Arsinoe II and Aphrodite on Cyprus. On the assimilation of Aphrodite, Isis, and the Queen see above, n. 3.

105 Marquaille 2008, 45.

type of state is usually ascribed to Ptolemy I Soter. The founder of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, it was said, had been a separatist since the death of Alexander in 323 and had made Egypt into a bounded, well-defensible kingdom based on ancient pharaonic traditions.[106] The eminent British historian William Tarn famously said of Ptolemy I that "alone of the kings of his time he was no warrior".[107] This view is no longer acceptable.[108] The historian Appian, a first-century CE native of Alexandria, called Ptolemy "the most formidable of the [Macedonian] rulers" after Alexander, praising his "preparedness for war [...] and the magnificence of his undertakings".[109] This included campaigns in Syria and an extensive naval campaign in the Aegean.[110] Ptolemy often personally commanded his fleet during naval engagements.[111]

An unwarlike Ptolemy would in any case be quite exceptional among the first Hellenistic kings. He would not have survived long. The Hellenistic Age was a particularly tumultuous and violent period, at least as far as the Mediterranean is concerned. The preceding Achaemenid period (ca. 550–330) had been relatively peaceful because political hegemony in this period was claimed by a single "hyperpower", the Persian Empire of the Achaemenid Dynasty, whose political and military supremacy was never seriously challenged until the invasion of Alexander the Great. The Hellenistic world by contrast was characterized by continuous, tremendously violent conflicts between several competing superpowers. Using Realist international-relations theory, Arthur Eckstein has analyzed the "Hellenistic world of war" as a multipolar interstate anarchy.[112] But there was a hierarchy. After the seemingly unbridled warfare among Alexander's Successors, the core conflict of the Hellenistic world consistently was the antagonism between the Ptolemies and the Seleukids.[113] Between 274 and 168, the two imperial powers confronted each other

106 For bibliography, see extensively Meeus 2014, 263 n. 2; cf. Marquaille 2008, 45, with references to modern views of Ptolemy I as peaceful in n. 27.

107 Tarn 1913, 216.

108 Most recently Hauben 2014; Meeus 2014; Strootman 2014b.

109 App., *Praef.* 10.

110 Hauben 2014.

111 For instance, at a combined expedition in Syria, Ptolemy commanded the fleet while the army was commanded by a general, Nikanor (Diod. 18.43; App., *Syr.* 52; cf. Hauben 1975); Ptolemy furthermore was present at naval expeditions in 309 (Diod. 20.27) and 308 (Diod. 20.37.1-2; Suda s.v. "Demetrios") and in the naval battle off Salamis against Demetrios I (Diod. 20.49.1-2, 50.5–6, 51.6, 52.3; Plut., *Demetr.* 15.2; 16.1; Polyaen. 4.7.7).

112 Eckstein 2006, 79–117.

113 Strootman 2007, 26–30, using Charles Tilly's model of competitive state formation (Tilly 1990).

directly in six major wars.[114] These are collectively known as the Syrian Wars because they were supposed to have resulted from rival claims to the southern Levant, known in this period as Koile Syria ("Hollow Syria"). In fact, much more was at stake than merely the possession of that specific region. As Chester Starr already pointed out,

> If there were six Syrian wars between the Ptolemies and Seleucids the causes were in part personal pride and desire for glory, but also the advantages to be gained from controlling the Mediterranean ports to which the luxuries of India and Arabia largely flowed.[115]

Historians today would probably no longer assume so lightheartedly a deeper lying economic cause for these wars, but Starr's observation that the Ptolemies and Seleukids fought over Mediterranean ports is basically correct. Various smaller and bigger wars in the eastern Mediterranean moreover were interwoven with the Seleukid-Ptolemaic antagonism, involving many other polities, most of all the Antigonid kingdom in Macedonia and the Attalid kingdom in western Asia Minor. Eventually, also Rome was drawn into the fray.[116]

An important arena where Ptolemaic interests clashed with those of the Seleukids and their principal allies, the Antigonids, was the Aegean. The Aegean was in fact a more contested area than Koile Syria. Koile Syria was a frontier. In the Aegean by contrast, imperial spheres of influence were not clearly delineated. At issue here was the goodwill and support of the city states, the *poleis*. Among various reasons why these cities where so important to the empires two to my mind stand out. First, the *poleis* and their hinterlands were significant sources of manpower for both empires.[117] Second, the *poleis*, being markets where surpluses were collected, constituted important sources of capital.[118] The already high costs of large-scale warfare increased exponentially in the third century due to the development of ever bigger battle ships and the growing importance of fortifications and siege warfare (which in turn was the result

114 See Grainger 2010 for a comprehensive narrative of prolonged Seleukid-Ptolemaic warfare until the end of the second century; good overviews of Ptolemaic-Seleukid warfare are also provided by Hölbl 2001, *passim*, and Fischer-Bovet 2014, 52–105.

115 Starr 1989, 53.

116 For the Roman involvement, see Eckstein 2008.

117 See Stefanou 2013; it is noteworthy that the largest percentage of Ptolemaic cleruchs (military settlers) after the Macedonians came from mainland Greece, an area not directly controlled by the Ptolemies. As late as 190 a Ptolemaic official, Aristonikos, traveled to Greece to recruit new troops (Polyb. 22.17).

118 Strootman 2019b.

of the increased importance of cities for empires).[119] Fischer-Bovet calculated that the annual costs of the Mediterranean fleet under Ptolemy II could easily have exceeded 4,000 silver talents, depending of the length of the campaigning season.[120] The fleet however was financed not only from the dynasty's own coffers, as ships were sometimes paid for by wealthy *philoi*.[121] In addition, ships could be provided by allied cities.[122] Some Aegean middle powers possessed considerable navies, for instance Byzantion and most of all Rhodes, an ally of the early Ptolemies.[123] The rapid monetization of the Egyptian economy, introduced centrally by the dynasty,[124] is indicative of the Ptolemies' need to obtain through taxation cash for their high military expenditures outside of Egypt.[125]

Ptolemaic warfare in the Aegean went back to the Diadoch Wars, when a Ptolemaic fleet sailed north in response to the Antigonid appropriation of control of the newly founded League of the Islanders (314), which threatened to give them naval supremacy.[126] This brief, and unsuccessful, campaign was soon followed up by a combined land and sea offensive in western Asia Minor and Greece, led by Ptolemy I personally (309–306).[127] Ptolemy spent most of his career as satrap and king fighting the Antigonids. His successor, Ptolemy II, fought both the Antigonids and the Seleukids. Direct warfare with the Seleukids began in 274, or perhaps already in 280. Until 195 the Ptolemies and

119 On the costly naval "arms-race" between the Hellenistic kings, see Murray 2012; cf. Beyer-Rotthoff 1993, 248–249, pointing out that the Ptolemaic war fleet was active mainly in the Aegean.

120 Fischer-Bovet 2014, 72; she also adds a maximum of ca. 5,600–6,700 talents using a different method of calculation, and a minimum of ca. 2,500–3,700 silver talents in case in "peacetime" only one-third of the fleet's personnel was paid for nine months only (but refrains from speculating about a Red Sea fleet). Murray 2012, 190, points out the significant additional costs of maintaining shipyards, foundries for the production of rams, workshops and arsenals for the construction and storage of catapults, and ship sheds to store the vessels in during winter season.

121 Hauben 1990.

122 Hauben 1990, 129 and 132; Fischer-Bovet 2014, 71.

123 Kah 2016; Gabrielsen 1997; Wiemer 2002.

124 von Reden 2010.

125 On the development of taxation in Ptolemaic Egypt, see Gorre and Honigman 2013.

126 Diod. 20.27. Ptolemaic intervention in the later Chremonidean War likely was provoked by Antigonid naval expansion (O'Neil 2008).

127 On this campaign, see most recently Hauben 2014. Ptolemaic garrisons held Sikyon and Corinth from 308 to 303 (Bagnall 1976, 135). No later Ptolemaic kings commanded personally in the Aegean theater; several princes of royal blood however were active as commanders in Asia Minor during the Second and Third Syrian Wars (Coşkun 2015). A good example of the type of individual that built the Ptolemaic thalassocracy in the Aegean is Kallikrates of Samos; on his extraordinary career, see Hauben 1970; 2013.

Seleukids fought each other in the Aegean, both directly and by proxy. They also fought each other in Palestine and Syria. After 195, they fought each other in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. In these wars, the Ptolemies relied on their fleet for transportation and support of their troops. With one notable exception—Ptolemy III's campaign in Babylonia (245)—Ptolemaic armies never ventured far from the coast.[128]

In recent historical research, empires are often seen as essentially negotiated enterprises involving various interest groups.[129] In the Hellenistic Mediterranean, notably priestly and civic elites were co-opted by the rival empires. Coercive means were used against cities only as a last resort. In the context of the Seleukid Empire, John Ma has elaborately shown how *poleis* in Asia Minor often had a relatively strong bargaining position *vis-à-vis* the empire,[130] while this author has pointed out the fundamental entanglements between civic and imperial elites (civic and imperial leaders often belonged to the same social groups, or even families).[131] In civic inscriptions, a bond between a *basileus* (the king as a person) and a *dēmos* (the citizens of a *polis*) were cast as *symmachia* (military alliance) but also as *philia*, a ritualized friendship bond for mutual assistance.[132] Because of the internal political disunity that characterized many *poleis*, imperial rulers often were eager to give in to the wishes of friendly regimes, and thus prevent them from changing sides. A case in point is the already mentioned Island League (or Nesiotic League). This federation of Cycladic *poleis* was originally founded under the auspices of the Antigonid Dynasty; but around 287 the Cycladic *poleis* strengthened their autonomy by negotiating a change of allegiance from the Antigonids to the Ptolemies.[133] All this also means that agents representing rival empires could be simultaneously present in the same city. The thing with network empires, is that the modern notion of state borders is not applicable to them: their networks crossed and their spheres of influence overlapped.

The control of islands was vital for the exercise of sea power in the Aegean.[134] The strategically located isle of Kos was a major Ptolemaic naval base in the

128 On this war comprehensively Hölbl 2001, 48–51.

129 See the "Introduction" to this volume.

130 Ma 2000. But rulers co-opted local elites and negotiated with them in exchange for revenue even in relatively firmly controlled regions such as Egypt (Manning 2003, 226) or Seleukid Babylonia (Strootman 2013).

131 Strootman 2011a.

132 Strootman 2019b, with previous literature.

133 Constantakopoulou 2012.

134 Constantakopoulou 2007.

third century.[135] Ptolemy II negotiated his way into becoming the protector of the Island League, as we just saw.[136] The League was dissolved under Antigonid pressure at the end of the Chremonidean War (ca. 267–261),[137] or early in the Second Syrian War (ca. 260–253).[138] After 250, the Cyclades came under the hegemony of Rhodes.[139] Ptolemaic sea power did not dwindle with the dissolution of the League.[140] The Ptolemies held on to their naval bases on Thera, the southernmost of the Cycladic Islands,[141] and on Keos, near the tip of Attika.[142] They also retained a major naval base at Methana, renamed Arsinoe, on the Peloponnesian coast of the Saronic Gulf.[143]

Although the Ptolemies no longer intervened militarily in mainland Greece after 250, they continued to intervene there indirectly and remained very much present in the *poleis* through benefactions, dynastic cults, and sponsorship of religious festivals.[144] Even their participation *in absentia* in the great Pan-Hellenic festivals in southern Greece (the Olympic, Isthmian, and Nemean games) can directly be associated with their imperial interests in the Peloponnese.[145] And if empire is indeed about visibility, then the Ptolemies were surely winners—even in mainland Greece, and even after 250. Bronze and marble portraits of successive Ptolemaic kings and queens could be seen far and wide in the Aegean, but particularly in harbor towns and Pan-Hellenic and regional sanctuaries.[146]

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135 Bagnall 1976, 103–105; Sherwin-White 1978, 90–108.

136 Relations between the League and the Ptolemaic court are explored in Bagnall 1976, 136–141. Meadows 2013 argues that the Island League was founded by Ptolemy II, and was purely an instrument of power of the Ptolemies; Buraselis 2013, 174–177, too, doubts whether the League should be termed a genuine federation of *poleis*; contrast however the more nuanced view of Constantakopoulou 2012.

137 Meadows 2013, 37–38.

138 Merker 1970, 159–160 with n. 99.

139 Reger 1994.

140 So Erskine 2013, who is skeptical of the Polybian narrative of Ptolemaic decline after 250.

141 Bagnall 1976, 123–134. Thera may have remained in Ptolemaic hands until the reign of Ptolemy VI (180–145); see Reger 1994, 33; Palagia 2013, 146–147.

142 Bagnall 1976, 141–145.

143 Bagnall 1976, 135–136.

144 This is often called "soft power"; I do not think however that forcing these forms of imperial politics into a distinct category is useful.

145 Kralli 2013.

146 Overviews: Palagia 2013; Hintzen-Bohlen 1992. Pan-Hellenic and regional sanctuaries: Bagnall 1976, 151–156 (Delos); Hoepfner 1971 (Olympia); Kosmetatou 2002 (Delphi); Cavalier and Des Courtils 2013 (Xanthos); Stanzl 2003 (Limyra). The Ptolemies of course were not the only dynasty interested in these sacred places; as to be expected, the Seleukids and Antigonids infiltrated these places as well.

Ptolemaic hegemony in the Aegean was extensive. For the late third century (the reign of Ptolemy III) Polybios mentions a Ptolemaic military presence as far north as Thrace.[147] Polybios' information is corroborated for this period by an epigraphically attested Ptolemaic *stratēgos* (military governor) in Thrace between 240 and 221.[148] On the opposite shore of the Sea of Marmara, Ptolemy II was in alliance with the Bithynian kings Nikomedes I and Ziaëlas, enemies of the Seleukids, who controlled the Bosporus.[149] In the northern Black Sea littoral, an inscription shows that Ptolemy II was allied with king Pairisades II.[150] Pairisades may have been a vassal of sorts, as is suggested by a black basalt statue of the Ptolemaic queen Arsinoe II excavated at Pantikapaion, near the Aphrodite sanctuary were the Isis sgrafitto was found.[151] This brings us back to the Crimea, and the ship called Isis.

Conclusion

We started this chapter with an image of a Ptolemaic warship, named after a goddess who was commonly associated with Ptolemaic queens. The presence of the ship so far to the north should not come as a surprise. The Hellenistic period was a time of increased connectivity. The Ptolemaic Empire took advantage of that and at the same time enhanced it, as imperial powers often do. Empires create connectivity and stimulate migration, both voluntarily and involuntarily (soldiers, sailors, colonists, slaves). If the ship indeed is Ptolemaic, its presence in a Crimean sanctuary dedicated to the sea deity, Aphrodite, and near a statue of Arsinoe II, can be seen as a symbolic demarcation of the northern edge of Ptolemaic maritime hegemony.

I have argued that the Ptolemaic Empire in its heyday under Ptolemy I to IV was seaborne: its main avenues of communication and control were maritime. Ptolemaic power was based on a strong fleet and an extensive high-density maritime infrastructure. Sheila Ager rightly stressed that the idea of a Ptolemaic grand strategy of defensive imperialism is largely based on hindsight: that Ptolemy I's campaigns in mainland Greece and Ptolemy III's campaigns in

147 Polyb. 5.34.8; cf. Liv. 31.16.3–4.

148 Bengtson 1952, 178 and 183 n. 1; the sources for the Ptolemaic presence in the North Aegean are discussed by Bagnall 1976, 159–168.

149 *FGrH* 434 fr. 14; *Sylloge* I3 456.

150 H. I. Bell in *Symbolae Osloenses* 5 (1927) 1–2.

151 The statue is mentioned by Murray 2002, 549, citing Vinogradov and Zolotarev 1999, 365 (*n.v.*).

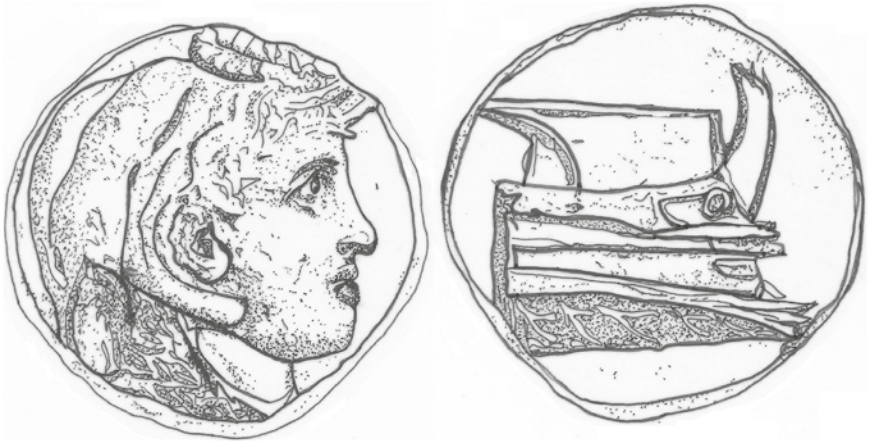

FIGURE. 5.2 Gold Stater of Ptolemy I, ca. 313–306
DRAWING LEONOOR STROOTMAN

Syria and Babylonia were unsuccessful does not mean that these kings had limited ambitions.[152] In fact, the opposite is true. And although it is also true that the Ptolemies never controlled the entire Aegean in actuality, they were certainly all over the place. The problem was that the Seleukids and Antigonids were there too.

The Ptolemaic Empire was different from the city-based thalassocracies of Athens and Carthage in that it expressed its sea power in its representation and propaganda—in panegyric (Theokritos' 17th *Idyll*; Kallimachos' *Hymn to Delos*), by the promotion of the cult of Aphrodite-Isis across the Mediterranean, or in the form of the well-known image of Alexandria as 'Queen of the Sea'. There is moreover the so-called "naval supremacy coinage" of Ptolemy I, but this type of coinage is rather early and quite rare (Figure. 5.2).[153]

Elsewhere I have argued that if Ptolemy I thought of himself as an Egyptian pharaoh, he would have stayed in Memphis. This is where he resided when he was still no more than satrap of Egypt. By making the Mediterranean port Alexandria his principal residence, and by bringing there the embalmed body of the world conqueror, Alexander, Ptolemy publicly upgraded his ambition from provincial ruler to world leader pretend.[154] As a province, Egypt of course was hugely important, and the Ptolemies did visit Memphis

152 Ager 2003, 49.
153 Bodzek 2014.
154 Strootman 2014b.

for specific festive occasions; but in the third century other regions were important, too.[155]

This is also what Ptolemaic propaganda tells us. Universalistic claims are pervasive in Ptolemaic representation, for instance in the Adulis Inscription of Ptolemy III,[156] or Theokritos' encomium for Ptolemy II, as we saw above. Around 270, the court poet Kallimachos boasted that Ptolemy II ruled an empire stretching from sunrise to sunset,[157] and more than two centuries later Kleopatra VII still claimed suzerainty over an empire extending from the Hellespont to India.[158]

Acknowledgment

While finishing this chapter, I heard the sad news that Herman Wallinga, former Chair of Ancient History at Utrecht University and an outstanding scholar of maritime history, passed away on January 1, 2018, at the age of 92. In a short obituary on Facebook, my colleague Jaap-Jan Flinterman correctly characterized Professor Wallinga as "een groot geleerde en een ontzettend aardige man" ("a great scholar and an extremely amiable man"). I dedicate this article to his memory.

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155 The Ptolemies took good care of Egypt, but one does not get the impression that in the third century Egypt was their priority when it came to (re)investing resources; the unknown, but likely high, combined costs of civic benefactions, gift giving to local *philoi*, garrisoning, fleet maintenance, and waging war suggests that more Ptolemaic money streamed into the war-torn Aegean than into Egypt.

156 Above, n. 68.

157 Kallimachos, *Hymn* 4.169–170.

158 Dio Cass. 49.40.2-41.3.

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CHAPTER 6

The Republic of Genoa and Its Maritime Empire

Thomas Kirk

The long history of the Republic of Genoa can be seen as an immensely rich laboratory of unfinished experiments. Precocious among Italian city-states in acquiring a territorial state, Genoa struggled for centuries to provide its *Riviere* with a homogeneous governing structure. Militarily and commercially aggressive from its infancy, at the height of its power few if any would have seen its far-flung collection of enclaves, entrepôts and islands as an empire. Pioneers in projecting power at sea and bending naval strength to the ends of commercial gain, Genoa eventually withdrew from the activities that had created its success in order to pursue a sort of financial dominion over much of the early modern world. All the while the city, *La Superba*, was racked by social upheaval, civil wars and power struggles involving every level of society. A stunning variety of social, political and economic experiments were the result of this nearly incessant conflict.

Given the radical ebb and flow of political power structures and the extremely variegated nature of the entity known, for lack of a better term, as the Genoese Empire, the recent historiographical shift towards conceptualizing empires as both a network of individuals and polities, and as a negotiated enterprise allows for a much-needed new perspective on the Italian city-state's historical experience. In this chapter, we will discuss the relative merits of several ways of conceptualizing the Genoese pre-modern empire prior to chronologically walking through the creation of a Genoese state, dominion and assortment of colonial outposts. This will provide an opportunity to examine the degree to which patterns of Genoese expansion coincided with pre-existing networks and patterns of trade. Following an overview of the phases of expansion, attention will be shifted to the topics of sovereignty and degrees of political control, and finally to the system's ultimate fifteenth-century decline.

The term "Empire" is so commonly used that far too little ink is spilled in providing a usefully precise definition of the term. Most commonly used in reference to transnational, multi-ethnic states, "empire" implies sovereignty, which in turn implies some sort of state structure. This is clearly not always the case with the maritime empires discussed in this volume; the earliest iterations of the English or Dutch empires in the Indian Ocean region, or even the collection of territories administered by the Genoese companies, the *maone*, or the

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Casa di San Giorgio were certainly not states. In each case a private company drove the creation of such structures and was responsible for their maintenance. And while each of these companies exercised some form of sovereignty, it was of limited geographical scope and subject to interference on the part of the states – England, the United Provinces and the Republic of Genoa – where the companies were domiciled.

A common corrective is to apply the term "commercial empire," which, however, suffers from terminal vagueness. Applying the term "empire" to a commercial network or system of networks implies either a monopoly or a state of dominance; the economic equivalent to state sovereignty. While this was usually a goal of both merchants and state actors, results were far from uniform. Throughout the centuries of Genoa's greatest economic power the republic and its merchants never attained a singularly dominant position save in a handful of specific trades or circumscribed areas. Venice in particular was always in a position to rival the Genoese, but there were several other significant competitors: Pisa, Barcelona, Marseilles, and later the English and the Dutch. Naturally, "commercial empire" could also be interpreted as a system connotated by a large degree of coercive power stemming from economic influence, which is more fitting of the Genoese case.

Framing our historical enquiry in terms of networks rather than empire sidesteps some of the thornier questions of definitions, while raising a different set of analytical challenges. Networks exist on many different levels and in many different forms. Limiting examination to the economic sphere, there are long-distance trading networks specializing in the acquisition and redistribution of high-value finished products throughout the Mediterranean and beyond. Alongside and at times overlapping such networks there are others tasked with procuring foodstuffs for the dominant city, Genoa. These networks intersect others focused on the distribution of goods in the hinterland and the sale of locally produced items and materials. There are also more specialized financial networks formed around the desire to concentrate and deploy capital in the burgeoning ventures of well-connected financiers. These systems, then, are embedded in a social reality that also lends itself to network analysis. Political allegiances, religious and cultural affiliations, family/clan structures such as the Genoese *alberghi* and so forth can easily be seen as networks, each with its own specific end. That does not mean, however, that they are extraneous to commercial networks; commercial bonds often form along the lines of pre-existing social networks. Trust in the pre-modern world was paramount in economic relations, so it is only natural that commercial ties should be formed along the same lines as pre-existing social ties.

The Republic of Genoa, from its rise as a maritime commercial power in the twelfth century, establishing trading colonies throughout the Mediterranean, to the sixteenth-century "*siglo de los Genoveses*," or "Century of the Genoese," presented elements of each of the three categories discussed above: empire, commercial empire, hub of extensive networks. During most of this long period, elements of all three categories combined to form an entity that defies efforts to pin it down with a precise definition. The blending of forms was in no way uniform in the various areas of Genoese activities, nor was it chronologically stable. Rather than viewing the Genoese experience as emblematic of a given system or in any way a model in comparative histories, perhaps it is better to consider the Republic of Genoa as an open laboratory and its "empire" as a perpetually unfinished experiment.

Chickens and Eggs: State Formation, Patterns of Trade, Overseas Expansion, Diaspora, Networks, Empire (*Imperium* and *Dominio*)

Several constituent elements of the Genoese state, empire and commercial network emerged at roughly the same time, the closing years of the eleventh century, prompting inevitable attempts to sort metaphorical chickens from eggs. Of course, the site of Genoa has been inhabited since time immemorial; archaeologists have discovered a bronze age settlement located more or less at the site of the modern Piazza Brignole. In all likelihood, this first settlement lent its name to the great city. "Genova," "Zena," "Genoa" all seem to come from the Celto-Ligurian "Genaua" or "Gena," meaning "mouth," as in the mouth of a river,[1] in this case the Bisagno River. The town briefly assumed some regional importance when the ancient Ligurii were confederated to the Roman Republic and the Via Postumia connected it to the interior, but that relative importance came to an end when the Via Aemilia Scauri was opened in the late second century BCE and the route between the Po Valley and Gaul largely bypassed Liguria. Although there is little direct evidence, the city's importance must have grown in the later Roman Empire, along with that of both Milan and Pavia; Genoa is the nearest outlet to the sea for both of those cities. Centuries later Genoese historians would point to the city's role in defending Carolingian lands against Muslim raiders,[2] although there is little evidence to support such a claim. Frankish naval power was based further south, along the coast of

1 Bompani 2010.

2 Giustiniani 1537, *fol.* XXV, *v*.

Tuscany, while the Via Francigena, the medieval thoroughfare linking Rome to the Frankish territories north of the Alps, lay in the interior, bypassing Genoa.

Paradoxically, a very thorough sack of Genoa in 934 or 935 by Fatimid Aghlabite raiders from Ifriqiya (roughly modern Tunisia) seems to have provided the spark that would propel Genoa onto the world's stage. The attack seems to have taken place within a conflict between the Fatimid Aghlabites and the Ommayad rulers of Al-Andalus. Launching from al-Mahdiyya in Ifriquiya, the Aghlabite fleet sailed first to Al-Andalus and then to attack Genoa.[3] The very fact that the Aghlabites considered Genoa worth sacking would indicate that the Genoese already engaged in some trades. A later Muslim account describes some of the goods taken: raw silk as well as linen thread and cloth, which seems to indicate that Genoa was already in contact with Eastern markets. The attack was so devastating that the city may have been entirely abandoned for a number of years afterward. In the wake of this sack, however, the city's activities took on a very different and militarily aggressive nature.

In 1016 Genoa combined forces with Pisa in order to contrast the efforts of Mujahid, Muslim ruler of Denia in Spain, who was attempting the conquest of Sardinia. The efforts of the Italian cities were successful and for the rest of the eleventh century Genoa alternated alliance with Pisa against Muslim foes with enmity against its fellow maritime republic. The 1060s witnessed a war between the two city-states, probably over control of Sardinia, but in 1087 they joined forces in an expedition against al-Mahdiyya, capital of the Fatimid Muslim state in Tunisia.[4] Significantly, the attack on Mahdiyya was used to extract trade concessions in the form of tax exemptions from the city's Muslim rulers.[5] There is also evidence that while the Genoese were fighting in the western Mediterranean, vessels from Genoa were trading as far afield as Alexandria in Egypt and there seems to have been a Genoese presence in Cairo by the early eleventh century.[6]

In fact, a Genoese presence so far afield and in the ports of the Muslim world should not surprise us; the Italian merchants were simply acting within the dominant commercial network of the day. Following the spread of Islam across northern Africa during the seventh and eighth centuries the principal axis of trade linking the Levant to the Maghreb, the Straits of Gibraltar and the Iberian Peninsula passed through Sirte in what is now Libya, and Ifriqiya (Tunisia).[7] Fully equipped ports were built, with basins, jetties, defensive

3 Musarra 2015, 19–20.

4 Cowdrey 1977, 1–29; Epstein 1996, 23; Kirk 2005, 8–9.

5 Abu-Lughod 2002, 103.

6 Epstein 1996, 24–26; Kirk 2005, 9; Polonio 2007, 27.

7 Lombard 1971, 78.

towers and chains, at Alexandria, al-Mahdiyya, Tunis and Bougie to support a sort of two-tiered trading network. Large commercial vessels were developed to ply the longer segments of this axis: two-masted ships rigged with lateen sails, heirs to the trading vessels of the ancient world and precursors to the later roundships of the Genoese and Venetians. There was also a lively cabotage trade employing a variety of smaller imbarcations. This activity grew steadily from the eighth through the eleventh centuries.[8] With the inclusion of the Iberian Peninsula in the Muslim world, the network grew more articulated; cities along the Spanish coast correspond almost exactly to cities along the Maghreb coast.

The combined Genoese and Pisan attack on al-Mahdiyya in 1087, therefore, fits perfectly into a strategy of penetrating the dominant trading network, with hopes of eventually appropriating it. There were certainly religious overtones to the assaults on Muslim shipping and trading centers,[9] but the *Carmen in victoriam Pisanorum*, the sole account of the 1087 attack, claims that merchants from Pisa and Genoa were among the promoters of the expedition.[10] Surely, many also saw the expedition as retribution for the sack of Genoa a century and a half earlier, but the fact that it was followed by demands for tax exemptions indicates that an economic rationale at least accompanied any religious motivations for the attack.

It is with the First Crusade, however, that the history of the Republic of Genoa really begins, and for a number of reasons. First of all, in a literal sense Genoa's historical record begins with the Annals of Caffaro, who began the first of what would become a unique continuous series of annals with Genoa's third expedition to the Holy Land. This coincides with the formation of the "Compagna," a body of six consuls representing all three of the city's areas, a unified governing body and the precursor of the medieval *comune*.[11] The first two crusading expeditions had gained a colony in Antioch (thirty houses, a church, a city square, and a *fondaco*),[12] and a great deal of prestige due to Genoese participation in the siege of Jerusalem. Through their ventures in support of the crusading movement in the early twelfth century further colonies were

8 Lombard 1971, 79.

9 The expedition is also noteworthy because the Christian forces, which included vessels from Amalfi, Salerno and Gaeta, in addition to those from Pisa and Genoa, wore pilgrim insignia. Epstein 1996, 23.

10 Cowdrey 1977, 15, 18; Epstein 1996, 22–23.

11 Airaldi 2002, 63–72.

12 A *fondaco* is an enclave under the jurisdiction of the merchants who live or operate there. This could be a simple warehouse and living quarters, or even a fortified neighborhood.

established at Jaffa, Arsuf, Caesarea, Acre and Tripoli. The remainder of the century witnessed numerous conflicts with Pisa, but also expeditions against Muslim shipping in the western Mediterranean, against Majorca and two unsuccessful attacks on Almeria.

The initial phases of overseas expansion actually predate efforts to create a territorial state on land in Liguria, the more or less contiguous possessions along the coast both to the east and to the west of Genoa – what would come to be known as the *Dominio*. Genoese forces captured Portovenere on the eastern *riviera* in 1109,[13] while control of the Apennine passes of the Via Postumia was guaranteed by the conquest of Voltaggio in 1121. During these same years, many communities of the western *riviera* were absorbed into the Genoese state.[14] Thus in little more than a century Genoa had made the leap from fairly insignificant coastal town to dominant city of a regional state on the Italian mainland, and expansionist player on the Mediterranean stage.

The many fleet actions against Muslim ships and towns from the Maghreb to the Levant and territorial expansion along the *riviere* to the east and west of Genoa responded to the demands of a single goal: the creation of a maritime commercial network, a system of outposts spanning the Mediterranean world. At the same time rivals, Pisans, Catalans or Muslims, were to be intimidated or subdued. Control of the Ligurian coasts was necessary to provide safe havens for Genoese shipping and to protect the dominant city itself. Corsica was prized not only for access to the island's resources, but also for the protection and havens it offered Genoese ships. The network thus assembled by the Genoese during the twelfth century, however, was not an entirely new one. Through the establishment of entrepôts in the Levant, a series of safe havens in the western Mediterranean and attacks on the trading networks centered around al-Mahdiyya, the Italians had disrupted the previous commercial network and appropriated segments of it piecemeal, rebuilding it over the course of the twelfth century, albeit with its center of gravity shifted to the northern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Prior to the eleventh century the Mediterranean could rightly be called an "Arab Sea,"[15] but in the twelfth it certainly could not.

Whether or not such a network or the collection of nodal points comprising it should be called an "empire" is another question entirely. Genoa was certainly one of the principal hubs of the twelfth-century commercial network and Genoese merchants and seafarers were among the most important and influential, but their dominance was not complete; they did not control it. In the

13 Airaldi 2002, 73–74.
14 Vitale 1955, 1.9–10.
15 Abu-Lughod 2002, 102.

wake of the Genoese victory over Pisa at the Battle of Meloria in 1284 and the Tuscan city's subsequent inability to regain its prior position, Genoese naval and commercial might were nearly hegemonic in the western Mediterranean, but never in the Levant where they had to contend with Venice and successful Venetian efforts to create a commercial colonial system, a network similar to the one built by the Genoese and substantially overlapping with it. The repeated wars between the two cities must be seen as a result of the continued efforts of each to exclude or subordinate the other in roughly the same trades.

Likewise, an examination of the degrees of political control exercised by Genoa over its colonies and outposts indicates an entity that stretches accepted notions of "empire." Given the juridical novelty of both the nascent Crusader states and the Genoese colonial outposts embedded in them, there is a lack of uniformity among the charters establishing the Genoese commercial enclaves. Bohemond of Otranto's concession of the thirty houses, a church and a well in Antioch was addressed to the Genoese present in *Outremer*. Other charters were made in favor of the Archdiocese of Genoa. In fact, in 1105 a canon from the church of San Lorenzo was charged with overseeing Genoese territories in the Levant.[16] The logistics of controlling such far-flung territories from the very distant dominant city, the central hub of the network, proved such that within a few years representatives of the communal government were chosen from among the Genoese who had settled in the colonies themselves. The culmination of this tendency can be seen in the concession of control over all Genoese settlements in Syria-Palestine to the Embriaci family in 1154.[17] The immediate focus of the communal governments in Genoa itself was the suppression of rivals in the western Mediterranean and an increase in control over trade flows there, leaving the Levant colonies in the hands of private or particular interest groups and kinship-based consortia. In fact, the communal government of Genoa concentrated its efforts on prosecuting wars against Pisa in 1119–1120, 1127–1133 and 1162,[18] and organizing a major expedition against Montpellier in 1143. In the last case, the Genoese crushed efforts to create a free commune and in return were granted one thousand silver marks, a *fondaco* and exemption from duties, along with restrictions on the activities of merchants from Montpellier.[19] They succeeded in two major goals: suppressing a potential rival, and forcing open access and a privileged position for Genoese merchants.

16 Musarra 2015, 40, 63.
17 Musarra 2015, 40.
18 Airaldi 2002, 75, 81–82, 86–87.
19 Airaldi 2002, 89–90.

By the mid-twelfth century the Genoese had established the contours and characteristics of the Genoese empire and its commercial network as it would stand for roughly a century. Enclaves had been created and were maintained through force. In the wake of the Third Crusade (1189–1192) and a change in the form of government in Genoa itself, the city did attempt to establish more direct control over its colonies, sending officials (*vicecomes*, consuls and *podestà*) to represent the central government.[20] However, just as no stable government was established in Genoa until the early modern period, no lasting uniform system for controlling the colonies prevailed either; in later moments of expansion we find colonies governed by private companies, powerful families and, later still, by the *Casa di San Giorgio*, a consortium of creditors to the state. With the partial exception of nearby Corsica, the Genoese were never interested in controlling territory. Their possessions were embedded in towns along the coasts of the Mediterranean, allowing merchants access both to the goods and markets of the hinterland and to the sea that linked the far-flung points to one another and to Genoa itself. Acquisition of these commercial, colonial outposts had been the result of private initiative as often as it had been the fruit of publically organized expeditions.

It is also clear that Genoa's rulers were not interested in gaining territory at all costs. In 1287, for example, following the death of Bohemond VII of Tripoli, the city attempted to establish a free commune and appealed to Genoa for protection. Benedetto Zaccaria was sent from Genoa with two galleys and he negotiated an agreement with the Tripolitans that would have given Genoa sovereignty over the entire city in exchange for protection against eventual aggressors. The communal government of Genoa refused to back Zaccaria up, though, and did not reinforce or occupy the city.[21] The logic of the trading network prevailed over that of acquiring territory. There was a considerable amount of commerce between Genoa and Egypt at the time and the city's governing body chose not to risk that trade; occupying Tripoli would almost inevitably have brought the Genoese into conflict with Mamluk Egypt, jeopardizing trade.

In the second half of the thirteenth century a major shift in the Genoese commercial network/empire's geographic extension and center of gravity took place, one that would definitively shape that system. All subsequent changes are better characterized as consolidation first, then retrenchment or retreat, and finally substantial abandonment. During the late twelfth and early

20 Musarra 2015, 40.

21 Vitale 1955, 1.92.

thirteenth centuries, Western commercial interests in the Kingdom of Jerusalem had come to be concentrated in the coastal city of Acre, which housed fortified quarters of Pisan, Venetian and Genoese merchants. Tensions among the three groups of Italian merchants grew with time, occasionally erupting in episodes of violence. This tension culminated with an all-out attack by the Genoese on the Venetian quarter of the city in 1256. The Venetians in turn occupied the Orthodox monastery of San Sabas, effectively blocking access to the port from the Genoese quarter and, secondarily, providing a moniker for the conflict: the War of San Sabas. Alliances involving practically all the factions active in the Kingdom of Jerusalem formed around the two warring Italian colonies, fleets were armed and launched in the home cities and two naval clashes decided the outcome. Successive Genoese fleets were defeated by the Venetians, and in 1258 the Genoese were expelled from the city.[22]

In the wake of this defeat the recently installed government of Guglielmo Boccanegra negotiated the Treaty of Nymphaeum with the Byzantine ruler of Nicaea, Michael VIII Paleologus, who hoped to regain control of Constantinople at the expense of the Venetians, who had dominated the city since the Fourth Crusade.[23] The treaty allowed the Genoese free, tax-exempt access to all ports under Paleologus' control, present and future, as well as the right to establish colonies in key ports. Both Genoa and Venice prepared fleets for the impending war, but the Venetians famously failed to intercept the Genoese, who in turn failed to arrive in time to aid Paleologus' recapture of Constantinople in July of 1261. Paleologus, however, respected most of the treaty's terms and the epicenter of Genoese activity in the eastern Mediterranean shifted to the Aegean and Black Seas.[24]

The Nature of the Beast: Places, Things, Patterns and Institutions

At its greatest extension in the latter part of the thirteenth century and throughout the fourteenth, the network of Genoese communities, fundamentally predicated on commerce, reached from the Sea of Azov and the Crimean Peninsula in the East, to Seville and Lisbon in the West, and from Egypt to England and Flanders. As stated before, this was in no way a homogeneous entity. The entire system should be seen as three distinct, semi-autonomous though interconnected areas of interest, each characterized by different degrees of

22 Lane 1973, 74–75; Epstein 1996, 146; Musarra 2015, 81–83.

23 Lane 1973, 36–42; Riley-Smith 1987, 121–129; Ostrogorsky 1968, 388–392.

24 Vitale 1955, 1.79; Musarra 2015, 83–84, 104–106.

state involvement, of institutional organization and of interaction with local institutions. Throughout most of this period the city of Genoa was the pivotal hub for the entire system, but the networks developed in the Black Sea region and the eastern Mediterranean had their own regional hubs in Caffa and Pera, Genoa being the link, fulcrum and entrepôt connecting the two sub-sets to the whole. Curiously, as the system began to falter in the fifteenth century, under attack simultaneously by Ottoman expansion in the East and political chaos in Genoa itself, discussed below, the network became even more polycentric, the extremities being linked directly, bypassing what had historically been the hub, the city of Genoa.[25]

The three principal constituent parts of the network were the core: Genoa and Liguria, the city and its regional state along the *rivieras* to the east and west of the city, combined with the island of Corsica; the merchant communities established in practically all the substantial ports of the western Mediterranean; the eastern Mediterranean, Aegean and Black Seas. Each area had its own function within the entire system, specializing in complementary trades, and each area was administered with very different institutional structures.

First of all, the Genoese showed little to no interest in controlling territory. Even in the core area, the logic behind expansion along the Ligurian coast had been to control the ports and safe havens along the seaward approaches to the dominant city. In fact, until the nineteenth century there was not even a system of roads connecting all of the coastal possessions to one another or to Genoa itself.[26] Where there was penetration into the interior the goal of such minimal territorial possession was that of ensuring control of the mountain passes and roads leading to the city, rather than for the exploitation of the land. Across the Ligurian Sea in Corsica, the communal government concerned itself with the principal port cities, again in support of the maritime commercial network. The remainder of the island was administered by a private association, or *maona*, first and then ceded in fiefs to powerful citizens.[27]

Settlements of Genoese merchants ringed the western Mediterranean, along the Provençal coast and on the Balearic Islands (while the Genoese had had a treaty with the Muslim governor of Majorca as early as 1181, a Genoese quarter was established there in 1230 during the Aragonese conquest of the island). Privileges were obtained for trading in Castile in 1251 and a Genoese quarter was established that same year in Seville.[28] Substantial communities were also

25 Heers 1983, 255, 273; Musarra 2015, 171.
26 Grendi 1982, 11.
27 Musarra 2015, 152.
28 Vitale 1955, 1.112.

present in Sicily, primarily in Messina and Trapani, those in this latter city possessing their own church and *loggia*. The Genoese also had their own *loggia* in Naples.[29] Less studied and almost certainly less substantial were the merchant communities of the Maghreb, where traffic flourished nonetheless, especially in the century or so following Genoese expulsion from Acre. The first voyages to Flanders in 1277 marked an extension of the western system,[30] as did the establishment of a Genoese quarter in Lisbon in 1317.[31]

Following Genoese expulsion from Acre in 1258 Genoese trade with the Levant shifted to Laiazzo on the Cilician coast of Asia Minor, where Genoese were active until the city's fall to the Egptian Mamluks in 1347, and to Cyprus, where notarial records bear witness to increased activity at least from the 1290's.[32] Cyprus would long remain an important Genoese destination and eventually come under substantial Genoese control. A dispute between the Venetian and Genoese representatives at the coronation of Peter II of Lusignan in 1372 led to a Genoese military expedition and the capture of Famagusta, which would remain in Genoese hands until 1464.[33]

The central focus of Genoese activity in the East, however, came to lie in the Black Sea. Michael VIII Paleologus allowed the Genoese to settle in Pera, just across the Golden Horn from Constantinople proper, in 1267–68. Nearly a century later the Genoese obtained complete possession of the city after a brief war with the emperor John VI Cantacuzenus.[34] The earliest recorded Genoese voyage to a Black Sea destination dates to 1274, to Soldaia, an active Venetian outpost on the Crimean Peninsula. Shortly thereafter the Genoese obtained the ancient city of Theodosia, perhaps granted to them by the Tatars, which was renamed Caffa and became the center of Genoese activity on the northern shores of the Black Sea. Defensive walls were built in 1281, the Genoese *Officium Gazarie*, created to oversee trade with the region, rebuilt the settlement as a planned city in 1316.[35] The Mongols of the Golden Horde unsuccessfully besieged the city in 1307 and burned it in 1308.[36] They made a concerted effort to expel Westerners from the entire region in the 1340's. In 1343 the Golden Horde expelled Latins from Tana, primarily a Venetian enclave, although the Genoese

29 *Ibid.*, 1.112–113.
30 Chaunu 1983, 93; Lopez 1966.
31 Musarra 2015, 102.
32 *Ibid.*, 103.
33 Vitale 1955, 1.141–142; Heers 1983, 232–233.
34 Vitale 1955, 1.79–81; Musarra 2015, 88, 105.
35 Petti Balbi 1991, 381–383; Musarra 2015, 105.
36 Epstein 1996, 184.

had also had a consul there since 1304. The following year, 1344, the Venetians were granted trading privileges and a *bailo*, or consul, in Caffa, effectively concentrating Western commerce in the city.[37] Famously besieged by the Golden Horde again from 1343 to 1349, Caffa was a victim of an early example of bacteriological warfare; bubonic plague had broken out among the ranks of the Mongol army and in an effort to level the playing field the Mongols catapulted the corpses of plague victims over the city walls, precipitating an epidemic within the settlement and leading, probably, to the spread of the plague to western Europe.[38] Having survived both the siege and the plague, the Genoese occupied Soldaia in 1365 and in 1381 Khan Toqtamish recognized their control over the region from Caffa to Cembalo, a military port, with the surrounding areas tributary to the Genoese.[39] Caffa eventually fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1475.

Further Genoese settlements and fortresses were established on the Danube Delta and in the Comnenus lands along the southern shore of the Black Sea, primarily Trebisond, although the local rulers did not grant these colonies political autonomy.[40]

Genoese activity in the Aegean also increased dramatically in the wake of the Treaty of Nymphaeum. Michael VIII Paleologus ceded Phocaea and its precious alum mines on the Ionian coast of Asia Minor near Smyrna and the island of Chios to Benedetto and Manuele Zaccaria. Benedetto Zaccaria also occupied Chios in 1304 and was granted control of the island for ten years. The Byzantines reestablished their authority over the area in 1329, only to lose it to a Genoese military expedition in 1346.[41] The Maona of Chios, the private company formed to administer the territories conquered by the expedition, including both Chios and Phocaea, auctioned the mining rights to the Gattilusio family, also Genoese, who had taken control of Mytilene and would soon extend their domains to include Thasos, Lemnos, Samothrace and Enos.[42]

Naturally, each of these areas supported substantially different trades, and in the Mediterranean region the overall balance of movement of goods, by value at least, was from East to West. The West of course is not generalized, but is rather represented by the dominant city of Genoa, which was both a center of consumption and a redistributive center for imported goods to be sent

37 Musarra 2015, 135.
38 Herlihy 1997, 22–24; Vitale 1955, 1.135–136; Epstein 1996, 212–213.
39 Musarra 2015, 106.
40 *Ibid.*, 106.
41 Vitale 1955, 1.134; Heers 1983, 239.
42 Musarra 2015, 104.

overland towards northern Italy and over the Alps to France, the Holy Roman Empire and beyond. In the opposite direction, European goods to be exported to the Levant arrived over the same mountain passes for re-export by sea.

In the area comprising the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean, Pera acted as hub, an entrepôt and staging center for western goods either destined for consumption in Constantinople or to be used as exchange goods in the eastern ports.[43] Along a north-south axis, Genoese merchants acquired linen, cotton, spices, indigo and incense from Alexandria in Egypt, while furnishing the Egyptian market with woolen cloth from the West, mastic from Chios as well as amber, wax, wheat and slaves from the Black Sea ports. Goods from the steppe converged on Caffa (honey, wax, timber, wheat, furs and slaves), only some of which found their way to the West, the rest fueling trade within the eastern Mediterranean. Cyprus provided cotton, indigo, sugar, salt and wine. Chios, one of the few locations in the Mediterranean that produced mastic, was a market for the alum mined at Phocaea, as well as for goods produced in the Turkish lands of Anatolia – cotton and pitch – and Persian silks. Spices travelling overland from the Indian Ocean region could also be found in Smyrna and shipped out from Chios.[44]

The slave trade was always a lucrative segment of commercial activity within this part of the Genoese network. Slaves from the Russian steppe and slaves arriving in the ports of the Danube delta – Russians, Circassians, Tatars and Turks, as well as Bulgarians, Hungarians and Wallachians – were sold primarily to Mamluk Egypt, although there was also a market in the West: in Genoa itself, Italy, southern France and the Iberian Peninsula.[45] In the fourteenth century the papacy tried in vain to stop the sale of Christian slaves and even to impose the liberation of slaves who converted to Christianity.[46]

Shifting our attention westward, Genoa was not only the principal hub of the entire network, but also the regional hub of its traffic in the western Mediterranean and a staging area for goods arriving overland from the Po Valley of northern Italy and from the Champagne fairs in northern France. Both textiles and agricultural products reached the city from the various centers of the Po Valley, alongside the woolen textiles of France and Flanders acquired at the Champagne fairs. Spices imported from the Levant were the principal element in the range of products balancing this trade.[47] While there are no systematic

43 Lopez 1966, 318–319.
44 Heers 1990, 166–168; Musarra 2015, 103–105; Vitale 1955, 1.113–114.
45 Heers 1983, 227–228; Musarra 2015, 109–110.
46 Musarra 2015, 110.
47 Vitale 1955, 1.109–111; Musarra 2015, 108; Cipolla 1994, 223.

records, volumes of trade with Champagne remained high throughout most of the thirteenth century,[48] declining with the importance of the fairs and with the opening of a sea route to northern Europe in 1277.[49] At that point raw wool from England, previously destined for the textile manufacturers of France and Flanders, was imported directly to Genoa where it increasingly replaced wool from Syria and the Maghreb. A portion of the English wool would be worked in Genoa, but much of it was re-exported to the textile centers of Lombardy and Tuscany.[50]

The axis running from Genoa to the coast of Tunisia lay along one of two paths: along the coast of the Italian Peninsula where Naples and Salerno marked access points to the wheat and agricultural products of southern Italy, and eastern Sicily and the port of Messina; or along the coasts of Corsica and Sardinia, and Trapani on the western coast of Sicily. The ports of North Africa, then, were important markets for European finished textiles and artisanal products, and sources of raw materials such as wool, leather, indigo, wax, coral and, to redress an unequal balance of trade, gold from sub-Saharan Africa.[51]

Further west, beginning in 1282 the Genoese obtained rights to exploit salt production on Ibiza.[52] With time, Majorca would also become an important market for African goods that could be used to supplement the cargoes of vessels sailing from Chios to England and Flanders.[53] The establishment of a Genoese community in Seville in 1251 accelerated penetration of the Iberian Peninsula, laying the groundwork for extensive exploitation of the Spanish economy in the future.[54]

Further west still, in 1317 Emanuele Pessagno, counsellor to King Denis of Portugal, obtained the land that would soon become the Genoese quarter in Lisbon.[55] Genoese activities in Lisbon tended to be something of an anomaly, not fully inserted into the broader networks linking the Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds. Not an essential port of call for the long-distance trades linking the Mediterranean to the North Atlantic, Lisbon was a base for regional trade with the cities of the Atlantic coast of France and the cabotage routes linking

48 Vitale 1955, 1.109.

49 Chaunu 1983, 93. On the opening of the Atlantic route, Lopez 1966, 324–325. Paolo Malanima places the beginning of the decline of the Champagne fairs around 1320: Malanima 2015, 462.

50 Musarra 2015, 171.

51 Vitale 1955, 1.111–112; Chaunu 1983, 116.

52 Musarra 2015, 100.

53 Heers 1983, 275.

54 Vitale 1955, 1.112.

55 Musarra 2015, 102.

the coastal centers between Lisbon and Bruges. Of particular importance in Lisbon was the Genoese family of the Lomellini, who at the same time sought new markets and products in the Atlantic, Irish leather products for example, although the Lomellini tended to avail themselves of Portuguese and Florentine shipping and Florentine markets.[56] Theirs was more of a private network unto itself, rather than a segment of the broader Genoese system.

Thus far, it has been easy to discuss "the Genoese," their presence, their network, the trades, outposts and colonies in their hands. It is, however, much more difficult to define "the Genoese" or to assess degrees of belonging or embeddedness in a system. The institutional structures governing the far-flung settlements of the Genoese range from non-existent, to the direct sovereignty of an individual who is also a citizen of Genoa, to private associations of Genoese citizens more or less recognized by Genoa's government, to consuls or other official direct representatives of the communal government of the dominant city. The potential for confusion is compounded by the chaotic nature of Genoa's political and institutional history and a remarkable degree of fluidity in the allegiances of self-identifying Genoese living in the colonial outposts. If the policies and priorities of the faction in power did not align with those of merchants in a particular overseas settlement, that settlement was likely to disregard directives from Genoa. In moments of relative stability, the communal government often tried to exert a greater degree of control over the settlements of its citizens, but such efforts were usually quite short-lived. On the other hand, the lack of a stable government in Genoa seems to have allowed for an elevated degree of flexibility and resilience of the network as a whole. In fact, it was during the fifteenth century, when the city came under the control of the stronger, more centralized states of France and Milan, that the network entered a long phase of decline. We must now turn our attention to these issues: the administrative structure of the colonies, and relations between the center on the one hand, and the regional nodal points and systemic whole on the other.

It is very difficult to describe the institutional structure of Genoa itself, because its turbulent political environment spawned a variety of forms of government. In extremely broad terms, various forms of commune governed by a council of elders gave way to a diarchy from the noble houses of Doria and Spinola in the late thirteenth century. This system in turn gave way to a "captaincy of the people," transformed into a government led by the *doge perpetuo*, created by Simone Boccanegra in 1339. In theory doges were chosen for life,

56 Heers 1983, 289–291.

although it was extremely rare for doges to actually die in office. This model prevailed, albeit with interruptions and periods of foreign domination until 1528 when a comprehensive set of reforms created the much more stable aristocratic republic.

This outline, however, gives the impression of a greater degree of stability than was actually enjoyed. Quite apart from the successive forms of government, it is always more useful to think of Genoese institutions as merely vehicles for competition among factions, powerful families and consortia of wealthy individuals. The array of fault lines is astounding: Guelfs and Ghibellines, nobles and commoners,[57] allies of one or another of the four principal noble houses, or those opposed to all four of them, hangers-on of one or another of the families who dominated the position of doge, merchants or artisans, etc. Alliances and conflict could form along and across any of these lines. No single individual, family or even faction was ever able to sufficiently gain the upper hand to establish a stable regime.

Turning then to the colonies, it is no surprise that no coherent system was ever created for governing the colonies or for managing overall trade.

In the simplest of cases, such as the small merchant communities of North Africa, there was no consul or *podestà* as in the more important outposts of the East, but a "scriba," or scribe. This figure's role was primarily that of representing Genoa's fiscal interests, collecting customs duties imposed by the commune.[58]

In the core area of the Ligurian coast and Corsica, a *podestà* or captain was named by the communal government to ensure an acceptable degree of control over the towns and ports. Little direct control was exercised over the countryside as much of the territory was in the hands of the feudal nobility, many of whom also participated in the commercial life of the dominant city and competed for political sway there.[59] At first glance this could appear a sort of division of labor, with the communal government responsible for more urban settlements and the nobility for rural areas. Bearing in mind, though, that the feudal nobility was also active in Genoese politics, occupying the highest offices in the city and vying with rival factions for political dominance, such

57 The distinction between nobles and commoners is not as clear as it appears. The term "noble" was used to refer to the descendants of members of the council of elders. Thus, they were not necessarily feudal nobility. By the same token, families of *popolari*, commoners, could obtain fiefs and enter the ranks of what is commonly referred to as "the nobility." Heers 1983, 335–347; Kirk 2005, 22–24.

58 Vitale 1955, 1.111–112.

59 Heers 1983, 349–352; Petti Balbi 1991, 287–289, 307–311; Polonio 2007, 30–32.

a division is less clear cut. Since the nobles were among those choosing magistrates to represent the commune's interests in the subject territories, they exercised considerable influence in urban areas as well, albeit in a less direct manner and in competition with other groups.

Further afield, the degree of real control enjoyed by the central government varied greatly both over time and from place to place. A nominal representative of the Genoese commune was nearly always present, although such figures were often chosen locally by the Genoese merchants active in a particular colony. The example of Pera demonstrates how this could lead to a divergence of policies between the dominant city and the colony. During an episode of the interminable wars between Guelfs and Ghibellines, in 1317 the Guelfs succeeded in driving the Ghibellines from power and in July, 1318 ceded *signoria* over Genoa to Robert of Anjou, then head of the larger Guelf faction. The Genoese of Pera, however, were wary of the house of Anjou's continued designs on Constantinople and in the interests of the continued stability of their trade they opposed the ascendency of Robert. Acting not only independently of Genoa, but in a hostile manner to the new alliance, the inhabitants of Pera took up piratical activity against Guelf shipping. In 1324 Robert of Anjou sent a small fleet under the command of Carlo Grimaldi, a Genoese Guelf, to bring the colony back in line, but he was unable to do so.[60]

We have also seen that in some cases territories or settlements were obtained through the initiative of private citizens: Chios and Phocaea during the initial phase of Genoese occupation; and the Aegean islands controlled by the Gattilusio family. In these cases, the central government had little sway over the actions of its citizens.

The cases of Chios and Cyprus both offer examples of yet another, typically Genoese expedient: the colony governed by private association. Benedetto Zaccaria occupied Chios in 1304, obtaining imperial recognition for ten years.[61] The Zaccaria's position was renewed, but in 1329 the Byzantines reestablished their dominion over the island. Two decades later, the island would once again become Genoese, a side effect of the ongoing struggle between Guelfs and Ghibellines in Italy. In 1346 the Genoese doge, Giovanni Murta, hired a fleet of privately owned vessels to attack the forces of the Genoese Guelf faction led by the Grimaldi family who, from their base in Monaco were in a position to threaten Genoa. The size of the fleet assembled caused the Guelfs to withdraw, leaving the Genoese fleet unemployed. Murta encouraged them to sail to the

60 Musarra 2015, 131–132.

61 *Ibid.*, 104.

East to protect Genoese interests in the region. The commander of the Genoese fleet informed Anna of Savoy, regent of the Byzantine throne, of Venetian plans to attack Chios, hoping that she would place the island under his protection. When that did not happen, Simone Vignoso, the Genoese commander, decided to attack and occupy the island himself. On their return to Genoa, the communal government was unable to pay the expenses of the expedition, so a company was formed by the participants in the expedition, the *Maona di Chio*. As a guarantee against future payment the *maona* was granted to right to rule the island and exploit its resources.[62] The *maona* was reorganized in 1362 and eventually the participants banded together in a consortium, or *albergo*, and adopted the name Giustiniani. The *maona*/*albergo* retained control over the island until its fall to the Ottoman Turks in 1566.

In similar manner, the expedition launched against Cyprus in 1372 by doge Domenico Campofregoso was assembled using private resources. The *Maona di Cipro* was formed from its participants and dominated the island, ruling Famagusta directly until 1464.[63]

Overall, it is clear that the institutional framework of the Genoese "Empire" was not a top-down structure; authority was constituted on an *ad hoc* basis and any control from the dominant city was tenuous at best. This seems to have been the system's strength; little direction from the center allowed for extreme network-wide flexibility and therefore an agility in adapting to changing circumstances that allowed Genoese merchants to thrive through two turbulent centuries and to remain powerful players long after that. In fact, the decline of the system coincides as much with the loss of Genoese political autonomy at home as it does with Ottoman expansion and the progressive loss of Genoese bases in Anatolia, the Aegean and the Black Sea.

During several multi-year periods over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Genoa was ruled by foreign overlords. These periods of foreign domination were a direct result of the factional struggles within the city; in each case the foreign power was invited into the city either in an attempt to find an impartial outsider to quell civil strife, or as a way for a doge to save his skin as his grip on power loosened. The first example of the Genoese taking recourse to ceding authority to a foreign sovereign dates to 1311. Against the backdrop of general discontent with the cost of war with Pisa and Venice, and especially of the management of the war effort against Venice, factional tension between Guelfs and Ghibellines erupted in 1296. This was followed only

62 Petti-Balbi 1991, 384–385; Musarra 2015, 136–137.

63 Epstein 1996, 236–237.

a decade later with the resistance of the principal noble houses to Opizzino Spinola, who attempted to create personal rule with the support of the *popolari* (commoner merchants and artisans). In an effort to bring peace through the offices of an external power, on November 3, 1311 the city was ceded to the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII for a twenty-year period.[64] Henry's priorities were not those of Genoa though; his goals were political in nature, not commercial, therefore his actions were detrimental to both the Genoese state and the mercantile empire. Not only did Henry confirm imperial privileges to Savona, undermining Genoese authority there, but he also exacted 40,000 florins for maintaining the imperial army and banished the Florentine Guelfs who had established themselves in the city. These measures were disruptive to trade and led to dissent even among the Genoese Ghibellines. When Henry died in 1313 the experiment came to an end, but chaos also returned to the city.

Open fighting between the two most prominent Ghibelline families, the Doria and the Spinola, made possible a return of the Guelfs to power, who promptly consigned the city to the champion of the Guelf cause at the time, Robert of Anjou, King of Naples. In July 1318 Robert was given control of the city for ten years.[65] Robert of Anjou's priorities were not those of Genoa. Robert's goals were those of extending the dominions of his house, in particular wresting Sicily from the house of Aragon. This, and Ghibelline resistance to his *signoria*, led to war between Genoa and both Milan and Aragon. Much of the fighting took place at sea and disrupted traffic in the Ligurian Sea, more generally in the western Mediterranean and even in the Aegean, as discussed above. Both the war and Angevin dominion over Genoa came to an end in 1334.

The fifteenth century was to witness more foreign domination, as well as the erosion of Genoa's colonial system in the East. The continued factional struggles within Genoa made it the target of the expansionistic appetites of its neighbors, primarily Charles VI of France, his brother Louis, Duke of Orléans and Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan. Through his marriage with Valentina Visconti, daughter of Gian Galeazzo, Louis had become Duke of Asti and nurtured ambitions of creating a personal state in Italy. Thus, when Savona rebelled against Genoa in 1394, it placed itself under the lordship of Louis of Orléans. The doge of Genoa, Antoniotto Adorno, chose to place the city directly under the protection of Charles VI on condition that Savona be returned to Genoa, in order to prevent the combined forces of Louis and Gian Galeazzo from dismembering Genoese territory and threatening to dominate

64 Vitale 1955, 1.99–101; Musarra 2015, 131.

65 Musarra 2015, 131–132; Petti Balbi 1991, 19–20.

all of Italy.[66] After an uneasy start to the period of French domination, Charles sent Jean Le Meingre, known as Boucicault, to govern Genoa in 1401. Best remembered for his severity in establishing an uneasy peace among the factions, Boucicault also launched a lackluster expedition to Cyprus, accentuated tension with Florence and drew Genoa into wars against Venice and Milan. When in 1409 he left Genoa in hopes of occupying Milan, the gates of the city were closed behind him, exiles returned and the city was consigned to Marquis Theodore II of Monferrato, whose own dominion would last only until 1413.[67]

With large payments to the doge and the explicit threat of a large army, Filippo Maria Visconti become the city's overlord in 1421.[68] Like previous rulers Visconti saw Genoa as a tool for advancing his own ambitions, drawing Genoa and its fleet into wars against Aragon, Florence and Venice first, and then alongside the Aragonese against the Kingdom of Naples. A Rebellion put an end to Visconti rule in 1435. By this time inviting foreign overlords had come to be a bargaining chip and an opportunity for the families who had gained a monopoly on the position of doge. Technically, the doge could be any commoner, but from the start only a handful of families were able to place one of their own in the position. Over the course of the fifteenth century the two families of the Campofregoso (or Fregoso) and Adorno became the only two capable of attaining the *dogato*. Thus, yet another factional division arose separating partisans of the Campofregoso from those of the Adorno. On repeated occasions, exponents of both families negotiated the overlordship of a foreign ruler over the city, often receiving territory and fiefs in return.

The city would come under foreign rule three more times during the fifteenth century: 1459–1461 under Charles VII of France, 1464–78 and again 1487–99 under the Sforza dukes of Milan. By this time, though, Ottoman forces had taken Constantinople and Pera in 1453, Phocaea in 1455, the islands of the Gattilusio in 1456. The colonies on the southern shore of the Black Sea, Sinope and Trebisond, followed in 1461 and 1462.[69] The Genoese were expelled from Famagusta in 1464 and Cyprus became a protectorate of Venice ten years later. Caffa fell to the Ottomans in 1475.[70] Trade reached historic lows in the years between the 1420's and the 1490's.[71] The Genoese commercial empire, the trading network spanning the Mediterranean had come to an end.

66 Epstein 1996, 245.
67 Vitale 1955, 1.153; Epstein 1996, 262.
68 Epstein 1996, 264.
69 Musarra 2015, 167–168.
70 Epstein 1996, 285; Musarra 2015, 167–169.
71 Epstein 1996, 272–273.

Endless infighting had exposed Genoa to foreign domination. Foreign dominators had drawn the city into costly and inconclusive, expensive wars, weakening an already fragile state. Genoa, of course, had been involved in countless wars before and had even risen to prominence in large part through force of arms, but the wars of the fifteenth century were different. The naval actions and incursions of the twelfth, thirteenth and even fourteenth centuries had been aimed at opening markets, gaining access to goods, establishing trading centers, protecting preferred routes or cutting into those of others. There was an economic motivation and an economic payoff. Wars were expensive and disruptive, but they also tended to be limited, so that all parties could return to trading. The wars of the French and the Milanese, on the other hand, were driven by dynastic ambition: wars for territory to be exploited by others. They drained the state coffers without promise of refilling them. As the Genoese colonial empire of the Black Sea and the Aegean fell piece by piece to the Ottomans, the government of Genoa itself devolved control of much of its remaining territories to the *Casa di San Giorgio*, the consortium of creditors to the state: Corsica and what remained of the Black Sea colonies in 1453, and even the mainland possessions of Lerici (1479) and Sarzana (1484).

Genoese merchants still had a very strong presence in the western Mediterranean and a growing presence in northern Europe. Weathering the Habsburg-Valois Wars, Genoa would retain a fair degree of autonomy within the orbit of the Habsburg monarchy. A constitutional reform in 1528 would even give it more political stability than it had ever known. A massive concentration of capital and a robust banking system had grown alongside Genoa's commercial network/empire, and with the loss of much of that network, an increase in banking and financial services replaced it.[72] The period known as "El siglo de los genoveses" spanning the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries bears witness to the resurgence of Genoese power in a new and different kind of empire, a financial one.[73] Genoa came to be Europe's preeminent financial center, controlling the purse strings of the Spanish Empire and the flows of capital throughout most of Europe. The early modern world that emerged in the sixteenth century was very different from the world in which the Genoese had created their maritime commercial empire. The capital and expertise gained in those earlier centuries, however, allowed Genoa to survive and even thrive at the center of a vast financial network, but that is a substantially different beast lying outside the limited scope of this chapter. Patriotic literature of the

72 Vitale 1955, 1.106; Musarra 2015, 172.

73 Among the many works on this topic, see: Ruiz Martin 1990; Carande 1943–1967; Braudel 1984.

sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would often hark back to the glorious days of the maritime empire,[74] but by then those days were a thing of the past.

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PART 2

The Northern Seas

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CHAPTER 7

Linguistics of Contact in the Northern Seas

Marco Mostert

The organizers of this conference on "Empires of the Sea" have given a definition of empires as "extensive, composite systems of control, often created through conquest and characterized by internal political and cultural diversity."[1] I want to take the reader to the 'empires' of the northern seas in the pre-modern period. By "northern seas" I mean the north Atlantic, the Irish Sea, the North Sea, the Baltic, and the White Sea. But although there were networks of many kinds established on the shores of these seas, I doubt whether we can in fact speak of 'empires' in the sense of the definition, as the political constellations found there were by no means "systems of control" in the modern (or even early modern) sense of the term as explained in the "Introduction" to this volume. Nor were there many instances of 'conquest' that can be attributed to the political constellations present in this huge area – and if conquest did take place, its character was not much different from the kinds of conquest taking place in land-bound empires. What we do observe is a political and cultural diversity in the maritime networks that is similar to that observed in pre-modern empires. There were attempts, some of them successful, at developing systems of political or naval dominance, employing trade routes, trying to control seaports, coastal regions and islands. In that sense there were developments that might have resulted in the kinds of "empires of the sea" that the organizers want to focus on. It has been observed, however, that the merchants and skippers such 'empires' might want to control could, whenever their coastal settlements were under threat, on occasion simply up sticks and move away to safer havens.[2] Because travel by sea tends to be easier and faster than by land, and because the seas provide wide areas that are difficult to control, controlling sailors and merchants is not as easy as controlling land forces.

Nevertheless, attempts *were* made in the northern seas to exercise some kind of political and economic control. By using ships, populations living on the seaboard might be dominated. For any kind of peaceful dominance to be possible, communications with the coastal communities needed to be maintained. In

1 See the Introduction to this volume.

2 Blockmans 2010, referring to Gipouloux 2009, 21, 125ff. For the late medieval period, see now also the relevant chapters in Blockmans, Krom and Wubs-Mrozewicz 2017.

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practice, this meant that forms of spoken communication needed to be developed, and languages chosen whose speakers could be understood by some at least of the members of the communities that formed part of the, of necessity rather loose, constellations that might be called metaphorically 'maritime empires' – whether they were primarily economic networks maintained by long-distance traders or political power networks. This suggests that a *lingua franca*, defined as a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different,[3] is a necessary prerequisite for empires – both for land-bound empires and maritime ones. I would like to present some evidence of the languages chosen for this purpose, as prerequisites for the development of maritime empires. Which languages were available on the seaboards of the North Atlantic, the Irish Sea, the North Sea and the Baltic, and which of those languages provided the role of *lingua franca*?

A second, related question has to do with the fact that, as the study of many an empire has taught us, whenever writing is available, written communication and administration are likely to be developed to help the exercise of control over the communities within the constellation that is the empire. Which written languages were available to take on these roles? Were those languages vernaculars or, as is the case on most of the shores of Western Europe (with the exceptions of Irish and Frisian),[4] were there examples of written languages that had been developed or adopted by the neighbours of the coastal communities? In almost all cases for which we have evidence, Latin provided a model for some, if not necessarily all, uses a written language might be asked to fulfil. Written Latin had been around on the shores of the North Sea and, albeit to a lesser extent, on those of the Irish Sea and the Baltic, from the times of the Roman Empire. In many cases, German (or rather Low German) was to prove a viable alternative in the later Middle Ages.

Before we will look at some of the evidence, a final caveat. I am a historian, and no specialist of historical linguistics. I am asking questions about language use that are inspired by the social history of communication rather than by the

3 The definition is that of the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2nd edn. rev., ed. C. Soanes and A. Stevenson (Oxford, 2005), 1019.

4 In Ireland an indigenous language, Old Irish, was promoted to the status of a written language without the intermediary of Latin. When the Irish and the Frisians started to write in their own language, in the case of the Frisians as late as the thirteenth century (see Bremmer 2004; an English edition is promised for *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy*), they were aware of the written languages of their neighbours. It is typical of the regional cultures of Western Europe that most people are both bilingual and biliteral: they can read their local spoken language, but only use the dominant regional written language when they write something down (Haarman 2008).

disciplines that occupy themselves with the languages of the past.[5] This means that I cannot speak with the authority of students of the history of the individual languages involved on the questions put before. I doubt, however, whether there are indeed any specialists capable of dealing with *all* these languages, for at a rough count there are some *sixty* languages that may have been spoken at one time or another in the premodern age on these northern seas, ranging from the Inuit languages of the Greenlanders via the Germanic, Slavonic and Baltic to the Finno-Ugritic languages, not to mention rarer visitors from southern climes. Fortunately, there exists an excellent reference work dealing with all languages that were once spoken and still are spoken on the European continent, in the recent two volumes on *Western European Languages* and the one-volume *Lexikon der Sprachen des europäischen Ostens* published in 2002 and 2008.[6] One cannot find all the information one might want in these three volumes. Being written by linguists, the information on the written forms of a language (if, that is, a language *did* have a written form) tends to disregard the kind of legal and documentary evidence that is most likely to have been made, used and kept in the administration of the kinds of economic and political constellations we are interested in here – the earliest 'literary' texts, when they exist in written form, are mentioned without fail, but they belong to registers other than those of pragmatic literacy.[7] Fortunately it is not all that difficult to supplement the articles in these lexica on the topic of the written registers of the languages used on and around the northern seas.[8]

Let us now see what is thought to be known about the languages spoken, the languages chosen to act as a *lingua franca*, and the languages available in a written form that might have been used for administrative purposes by the dominant groups in these maritime networks and empires.[9] The linguistic

5 Cf. Burke and Porter 1994, 1995.

6 Okuka and Krenn 2002; Ammon and Haarmann 2008.

7 Cf. Britnell 1997 or, for a very short introduction, Mostert 2012, 12–13.

8 Mostert 2012, 181–236, 'Language', is a start; the literature mentioned there can be supplemented by the *International Medieval Bibliography*, which is part of http://www.brepolis.net/. An attempt can be made to discuss the same questions for the (ancient and early medieval) Mediterranean, using the guidance of Meiser 2015.

9 Information on the languages mentioned can be found in Ammon and Haarman 2008, vol. 1 (Anglo-Norman, Breton, Cornish, Danish, German (High German), Dutch, English, Faroese, French, Frisian, Galician, Gaulish, Gothic, Greenlandic, Hebrew, Iberian, Basque, Icelandic, Irish, and Welsh), Ammon and Haarman 2008, vol. 2 (German (Low German), Greek, Gutnish, Lombard, Latin, Manx Gaelic, Mirandesish, Ancient and Medieval Nordic, Norwegian, Orkney and Shetland Norn, Picard, Russenorsk, Scottish Gaelic, Scoys, Swedish, Vandalic, and Yiddish), and Okuka and Krenn 2002 (Curonian, Estonian, Finnish, Ingrian, Karelian, Kashubian, Kukussi-Votic, Latvian, Lithuanian, Livonian, Masurian, Merja, Old Prussian, Polabian, Polish, Pomeranian, Proto-Slavic, Russian, Sami, Veps, Votic (Votian), and the languages of the *Slavia submersa*).

evidence is sometimes meagre at best, and therefore we will need to consider all of it, even if some of it may seem less obviously relevant to students of maritime empires. Hopefully, its relevance will nevertheless become apparent to the topic of this volume as well.

The Irish Sea

Let us begin with the Irish Sea. I will summarize roughly which languages are known to have been spoken here – and will need to go into some detail, if only to give an impression of the complexity of the linguistic question. The oldest languages of which we have any trace that were spoken here, in Scotland to be precise, were the Pictish languages, evidence of which survives from the third century. Slightly later, the Celtic languages, Irish, Breton, Cornish, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Manx Gaelic make an appearance, from the fifth century onwards. Celtic languages are spoken on all shores of the Irish Sea, and presumably one may have developed a way of understanding one another. From around 800 onwards speakers of Medieval Nordic, a term used for the ancestors of the Scandinavian languages, came to the Irish Sea. Meanwhile, on the eastern shores English, another Germanic language, had been developing in Britain after the departure of the Roman legions; it had begun pushing the speakers of the Celtic languages westward, and after the English in their turn had yielded to the Normans, the French dialects known collectively as Anglo-Norman came to the fore. It was when this language was dominant in England that, from 1169 onwards, Ireland was conquered, so that Anglo-Norman was heard in Ireland as well. In Scotland, by the fifteenth century Scottish Gaelic had declined in importance, and Scots, the English language of Scotland, had won the day. As the Celtic languages were considered to be notoriously difficult to learn, and as Anglo-Norman was the dominant language among non-Celtic speakers, it is not surprising to find that French took over as *lingua franca* around the Irish sea; it was spoken by the elites on all shores of the Irish Sea, but also, slightly more surprising perhaps, by merchants and even ordinary sailors.[10] This must have had to do with geographical factors: the seaways northwards from the Iberian peninsula and from the French Atlantic coast to the Irish Sea are relatively easy to navigate, and contacts with speakers of French, a language of prestige which was spoken by large numbers of people in the region, must have been useful for communication in many registers.

10 Kowaleski 2009.

As the winds will bring one relatively easily from the Iberian Peninsula to the Irish Sea (as indeed to the wider North Atlantic), it is not excluded that speakers of pre-Roman Iberian languages from the northern coasts of Spain, or the speakers of Mirandesish, the smallest variety of Iberian-Romance, languages which have been attested in Roman or post-Roman times, or indeed speakers of Galician and Basque may have ventured into the Irish Sea as well. But they did not settle on its shores, and therefore did not capture the enduring attention of maritime empire-builders – if, that is, the Irish Sea ever knew maritime empires.

Which written languages were available for legislation and administration from the fifth century onwards? From that early date, written Irish (Old Irish) existed, and we know that the Irish developed an impressive legal literature quite early on. English was written from the sixth or seventh century onwards. French, both in its Anglo-Norman and continental varieties, was available from the eleventh century. The Scandinavian languages developed a culture of the written word (apart from their runic literacy, which was known in Old and Medieval Nordic) only from the twelfth century onwards, when they were no longer politically present in the Irish Sea. Breton and Scottish Gaelic also developed rather late, at the end of the fifteenth century. All these written languages had some sort of model in written Latin, and the Scandinavian languages and Scottish Gaelic also had a competing model in Old or Medieval Nordic. But despite the availability of several written languages (and alphabets), no single one was used in the whole area of the Irish Sea for administrative purposes. The time when English was to take on this role still lay in the future.

So, what do we know about the Irish Sea in the pre-modern era? Presumably in the early Middle Ages the Celtic languages may have served as a *lingua franca*. This role was later taken on by French. But there was no single economic or political constellation that availed itself of this linguistic situation to build a maritime empire on the shores. Or maybe the medieval kingdom of England can be seen as a candidate as a founder of a maritime empire after all. On consideration, the pre-modern Irish Sea, although it may seem a prime candidate for developing a maritime empire, at least from a linguistic point of view, did not develop such a political constellation. The area did form networks with the North Atlantic – and presumably with the ports and sailors of the northern Iberian Peninsula – but there was no control whatsoever by any single ethnic or linguistic group.

The North Atlantic

What about the North Atlantic? Here the situation was different – up to a point. For one thing, the linguistic situation was far more homogeneous.

Granted, there may have been some Irish influence on Iceland, where monks may have settled for a time even before the Scandinavian settlers came,[11] and on Greenland Inuit languages were spoken at the same time as Icelandic, but the languages developing out of Medieval Nordic were dominant here. In the Viking age, i.e. from the eighth century onwards, speakers of the West Nordic variety (Norwegian and Icelandic but also Faroese and Orkney and Shetland Norn, which was also spoken in the most northern part of Scotland, Caithness, and on the Hebrides) completely controlled the waves. Slightly later, Danish, one of the East Nordic languages, although it was centred on the shores of the North Sea and Baltic rather than on those of the Northern Atlantic, became important as well. This had political reasons. The kings of Norway managed to gain control over the unruly Scandinavian settlers on Iceland. From the late fourteenth century, the kingdoms of Norway and Denmark were joined, and Danish influence increased in the North Atlantic.

The Scandinavians managed to understand one another fairly well. They communicated in the same way that is practiced between Scandinavians today. When a Norwegian talks to a Dane, he speaks Norwegian, but he speaks more slowly and distinctly than usual, and avoids using typically Norwegian words which he knows do not exist in Danish. With some experience, it is not difficult to speak Norwegian and be understood by a Dane, and if they adapt to the situation in the same way, then they will understand each other. This is what linguists call semi-understanding or semi-communication.[12]

There is solid evidence for this type of communication around the North Sea. An Icelandic saga written about 1250 provides the following information about the language situation in England c. 1000 AD:

> The language (*tunga*) in England then [1000 AD] was the same as in Norway and Denmark. But the languages (*tungur*) changed in England when William the Bastard conquered it. From then on French became current in England, because he was from France.[13]

The saga's author implies that Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse were the same language. He is evidently thinking of oral communication, as to his mind the spoken word belongs to the same language when the two languages were mutually

11 At the end of the eighth century: *Dicuil: Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, ed. and trans. J. J. Tierney (Dublin, 1967), 76.

12 Slightly adapted quotation from Nedkvitne 2014, 89–90, referring to Jahr 1999, 129. The following paragraphs amount to amended quotations from Nedkvitne's article.

13 Nordal and Jonsson 1938, 70, quoted by Nedkvitne 2014, 90.

intelligible. This is confirmed by another saga, describing a Norwegian who fled after the defeat of the Norwegian army at Stamford Bridge in 1066. He met a peasant on his way and tried to conceal his identity, but the peasant said: "you're a Norwegian, I can tell that from your speech" (*mál*).[14] The two were able to communicate, but the dialect or language differences were so evident that the Anglo-Saxon peasant was able to guess the home country of his conversation partner. If this linguistic situation existed in the North Sea, it was even more pronounced in the North Atlantic, where only Nordic languages played a role, languages which were perceived as being but different ways of speaking the same language. There was no question of having to 'choose' a *lingua franca*; there was but one candidate.

As for written language, the system of runes, considered indigenous, coexisted with literacy based on the Latin alphabet. Pragmatic literacy could use Latin, but quite early on it also used the local vernaculars. On Iceland and on the other islands there was influence of the language and practices of the Norwegian and Danish overlords as well. On the Faroe Islands, e.g. the first surviving document in Faroese is the so-called "sheep letter" of 1298, a document about sheep breeding, written by a Norwegian.[15] From the fifteenth century onwards, charters there are written in Danish – a situation which suggests cultural dominance, although the evidence is rather too slight to posit that the Faroe Islands were part of a Danish maritime empire. This is an instance of a feature typical of the regional cultures of Western Europe. Most people are both bilingual and biliteral: they can read their local spoken language, but only use the dominant regional written language when they write something down. In the North Atlantic 'region' this meant that the choice of a written language for administrative purposes was no problem either; it had to be one of the vernaculars that were perceived as a single language, and it might as well be the vernacular of the dominant political group, i.e. Norwegian or, slightly later, Danish.

On occasion, there must have been visitors from further afield in the North Atlantic as well. Before leaving the North Atlantic, it may be worthwhile to mention that Arabic was heard in Iceland in early modern times as well. Pirates from several countries, including the Barbary Coast, raided its coastal settlements. During this period, many Europeans were also taken captive by Mediterranean pirates and sometimes sold into slavery in the Arab world. One

14 Snorri Sturluson, *The Saga of Harald Hardradi*, c. 94, trans. M. Magnusson and H.Pálsson, *King Harald's Saga* (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 154, quoted by Nedkvitne 2014.

15 Sandøy 1965, 237, referring to Sørlie 1965. In 1310 a Faroese clerk staying in Bergen wrote a revised version of this *Seyðabrævið*.

slaving expedition is inaccurately termed the Turkish Abductions in Icelandic historiography. This was an expedition in 1627, conducted by a Dutch convert called Murat Reis (or Jan Janszoon), and the captives were taken to the Barbary Coast to be sold. The incident is still remembered in Iceland.[16]

The North Sea

But let us move on to the North Sea. Here, starting clockwise from Norway, the languages in the early Middle Ages spoken included Norwegian and Danish, North Frisian, Low German, Frisian, Dutch, French (Picard), English and Scottish Gaelic, and almost everywhere Latin could be heard (as a second language, if not as a mother tongue). Earlier still, we may assume that Gaulish and Pictish languages might also have been heard, but we have too little evidence to discuss that. For a while, Frisian, spoken from the sixth century onwards along the coastal strip of the Netherlands and eastwards towards the river Weser and beyond, may have served as a *lingua franca*. This is suggested, e.g. by the fact that in Old English 'Frisian' seems to have been synonymous with 'trader'.[17] Around the year 1000 Danish might have taken over, as Danish political expansion not only was directed towards the North Atlantic but also towards England and Normandy, and also eastwards, towards the south of present-day Sweden. In the non-Scandinavian parts of the North Sea, the political influence of Danish seems to have come to an end with the battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, when an attempt to regain the English throne was thwarted. As we have already seen, as long as the language used was of the Germanic family, no formal education was necessary to be able to make oneself known to its speakers, even if only in the registers available to semi-understanding or semi-communication. This meant that, in the later Middle Ages, Low German could come to the fore as a *lingua franca*.

Let us briefly consider language contact between speakers of a Scandinavian language and speakers of Low German. There is evidence that Hansa merchants and Scandinavians communicated orally in Bergen and other Scandinavian towns with each partner in conversation using his own mother tongue. The difference between *Mittelniederdeutsch* and the Scandinavian languages as spoken from 1250 to 1550 was smaller than between *Hochdeutsch* and the modern Scandinavian languages. In Novgorod the Hansa merchants

16 See Ólafur Egilsson, *The Travels of Reverend Ólafur Egilsson*, ed. K. Smári Hreinsson and Adam Nichols (Reykjavik, 2008).

17 Whitbread 1946.

used translators, but there is no evidence of translators in Bergen or other Scandinavian towns. A comprehensive correspondence between the Hanseatic *Kontor* in Bergen and the town councils in Lübeck and other Hanseatic towns has been preserved. Here the organisation in Bergen, mentioning numerous full-time and part-time officials, gives no indication of a translator. There is no evidence of a pidgin language – that is, a simplified language using words from both languages. Also lacking from the sources is any indication of language problems. There is no mention of people having learnt the other language as a foreign language, or of their being able to speak the other language. This is easy to understand if they in fact spoke their own language when communicating with the other group.[18] There are a huge number of loanwords from *Mittelniederdeutsch*, or Middle Low German, in the Scandinavian languages; this is natural if Scandinavian town dwellers became used to listening to Hansa merchants speaking Low German. In Bergen the local dialect had many more Low German loanwords than in the rest of Norway, which remained the case up to the nineteenth century. Today many of these dialect words have disappeared.

Our modern distinction between 'language' and 'dialect' is primarily relevant in a situation where there are written traditions for vernacular languages. Two different orthographic and grammatical norms for writing correctly yield two languages. Consequently, Danish and Norwegian are today seen as two different languages. If two persons write according to the same norm but speak differently, there will be two dialects. An illiterate person will only distinguish between people who he can understand orally, and those he cannot. People who understood each other in Old Norse were said to belong to the same *tunga*, which had as its basic meaning "the tongue in the mouth."[19]

What was the social and cultural result of this extensive oral semi-communication? When both ethnic groups spoke their own language, there was no reason to understand German as 'superior' to the Scandinavian languages. In cultural contacts the inferior group normally has to learn the language of the superior group, but not vice versa. This situation did not arise in Scandinavia. The Scandinavians never learnt Low German in the same way as they learnt French or Latin. There was linguistic equality between Scandinavians and Hansa merchants on the oral level.[20]

Further to the south, there is evidence of mutual comprehension between the English and the Frisians (and later the Dutch). Let me present two

18 Braunmüller 1993–1995, 14–25, and Jahr 1999, 131–135.

19 Nesse 2009a, 119; 2009b.

20 Nedkvitne 2014, 90–92.

examples. The earliest forms of the place name Muiden, at the mouth of the Vecht, have *muthan*. Through a number of sound changes this has become Modern Dutch Muiden. Now the name of the English port on the Channel Plymouth once contained the element *muthan*: the name simply means 'the mouth of the Plym.' In English *muthan* became 'mouth,' as in Dutch it became 'muiden.'[21] These were changes that took centuries – and yet modern-day fisherman and sailors in the Dutch navy, who did not follow courses in historical linguistics, call Plymouth Pleimuiden, as if the name of the port had partaken of Dutch sound changes. This means that an awareness or understanding of these sound changes seems to have been far more general than one would have assumed. That the English (or at least the inhabitants of East Anglia) at the end of the sixteenth century could still more or less understand Dutch is proven by a comedy in which a kind of Dutch is used, and a contemporary audience was apparently also able to understand Dutch, for without such an audience the play would have been incomprehensible and would hardly have been a success.[22] Whether to English ears there would have been much difference between Dutch and Low German remains to be seen. In any case, in the later Middle Ages Low German was the *lingua franca* of the North Sea, on its eastern and southern as on its western shores.

Had there been at any time a single maritime empire in the North Sea, it would have been spoilt for choice in the written languages available for its administration. Latin was in use everywhere, French (both in its Picard and Anglo-Norman varieties) was used from the eleventh century onwards in registers of pragmatic literacy, and Dutch and Low German would have been available to any such empire in the later Middle Ages as well. But no durable 'empire' was established. The only candidate that might be up for consideration was the Danish kingdom, which paired interests in the North Sea with similar interests in the North Atlantic and the Baltic. These interests were based on naval power, but they were realised in different periods, with the English dream evaporating in 1066, before dreaming of influence in the North Atlantic had started in earnest. And the Danish settlements in Normandy and the Netherlands had become assimilated to the dominant French and Frisian/Netherfrankish cultures in a matter of a few generations. If one wants to call this shifting Danish power network an 'empire' (*pace* Canute and his ephemeral 'empire'), it proved to be a moveable feast.

21 The name *Plym Mouth* is first recorded in a Pipe Roll of 1211, after the change from *muthan* to *mouth* or *muiden* respectively had been accomplished some time previously.

22 Thomas Dekker, *Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599), Act 3; cf. Loyn 1962, 85.

The Baltic

Finally, let us have a brief look at the Baltic. Linguistically this area is the most interesting, in that the languages available for the role of *lingua franca* come from several mutually incomprehensible language families. Let us pass over in silence Gothic, Lombard and Vandalic, languages which occur in the first centuries of our era on the southern shores of the Baltic, but were spoken by peoples who made their mark mainly on the shores of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Let us rather start with the Scandinavian languages in the West, Swedish (and Gutnish on Gotland) and Danish, and continue anti-clockwise with Lower German, also a Germanic language. Then we arrive at areas where Slavonic languages and dialects are spoken: Polabian, Kashubian, Polish and Masurian -and further to the north-east we will encounter another set of Slavonic languages and dialects, which will develop into Russian. But first we encounter the Baltic languages: Old Prussian (spoken until the seventeenth century in what we know as East Prussia), Lithuanian and Latvian. Then we come to the Finno-Ugritic languages, stretching from Livonian and Estonian in the south by way of Finnish and Karelian to Sami, the language of the Lapps (or Sami) in the north. Different from the linguistic situation in the North Sea and North Atlantic areas, but maybe less different from the situation in the Irish Sea, there was no way of arriving at a language that would have been comprehensible to the native speakers of all of these languages. And yet in the Baltic, too, maritime networks developed, with links to the networks in the North Sea (as is made clear, e.g. by the presence of the Frisians and later the Flemish and Dutch as traders and intermediaries between north and south). Swedish, which extended its influence eastwards, might have been a candidate (it is still the second national language in Finland), but its influence on the southern shores of the Baltic remained limited.

In the Baltic, as in the North Sea, Low German became the *lingua franca* as if by default. In fact, German was used as a *lingua franca* from the western shores of the North Sea to the lands of the Ukraine and Romania in the southeast and to Scandinavia and Finland in the north. In the late medieval Baltic German was a language of trade, politics, religion and culture. The use of German was so overwhelming, that in Estonia the other languages are subsumed under the heading *undeutsch*.[23] And indeed, a Dutchman can relatively easily understand the language of most of the archival sources from Estonia, as they seem to be written in a dialect that has much in common with that of the Dutch northern province of Groningen. Incidentally, the late medieval

23 Selart 2014, 37.

maritime networks of the Baltic and the North Sea proved to be very durable indeed. In Walter Kempowski's autobiographical novel *Tadellöser und Wolf*, set in the German port of Rostock in the 1930s and 1940s, contacts with people from East Prussia and Poland, Denmark and Belgium occur. The protagonist's German-speaking father claimed that, in the First World War, he had no problem understanding the Flemish that was spoken on the Western front – even in the early twentieth century a linguistic continuum, linking the Flemish dialects with those of speakers of Low German along the shores of the eastern Baltic, seems to have persisted.[24]

German was not just another spoken language: it was a written language as well, and as such it came to compete, at least in certain registers, with Latin. Wherever German came to be used, it came into competition with Latin (especially in the field of law and the government of the towns, which in Europe north of the Alps and east of the Rhine were developed mainly with the aid of German settlers – because of this, the so-called Magdeburg law was used as far away from its city of origin as Romania). The development of written culture in East Central Europe, for instance, had to come to grips with the two written languages of Latin and German.[25] In the Baltic, apart from Scandinavian runic literacy, any language aspiring to the status of written language had the models of both Latin and German literacy to choose from. In matters of pragmatic literacy German was more often than not the preferred choice.

So it seems that the maritime networks of the Baltic, especially during the later Middle Ages, needed German to function. This did not preclude the use of Latin in situations of language conflict: a fifteenth-century disgruntled Polish *capitaneus*, who knew German very well, upon receiving a letter from a functionary in the Order of the Teutonic Knights in German, graciously wrote back in Latin, stating that, alas, "I could not at all understand the letter for this reason, that it was not written in the common idiom of the whole world, i.e. in Latin" (*non est scripta idiomate communi totius mundi, puta in latino*).[26] But similar instances of linguistic conflict were usually quickly solved, because German as a second language proved to be an important tool in the linguistics of contact between people of the most diverse ethnic and linguistic background, certainly in the Baltic.

24 W. Kempowski, *Tadellöser und Wolff: Ein bürgerlicher Roman* (München, 1971), chapter 3, at the beginning.

25 Cf. Adamska 2013.

26 *Codex diplomaticus Vitoldi magni ducis Lithuaniae, 1376–1430*, ed. A. Prochaska (Kraków, 1882), No. 508, p. 247, quoted in Adamska 2013, 363.

One will have noticed, however, that at no point in history was the Baltic the object of empire building – or at least no-one managed to found a maritime empire encompassing all of the Baltic in pre-modern times. Did that have anything to do with the complex linguistic situation? Our provisional conclusion might be that seas on whose shores languages from several linguistic families are spoken (in our case the Irish Sea and the Baltic) are less likely to suffer from maritime empire building. But the case of the Irish Sea in early modern and modern times proves that it is not impossible to build an 'empire', as the British managed to control that sea on all sides – and impose linguistic restrictions to precipitate the process.

In Conclusion

To conclude, we have seen that the northern seas saw the development of maritime networks of various sorts. We have also seen that, despite sometimes very complex linguistic situations, choices of one or another language as *lingua franca* imposed themselves. Similarly, in those societies which used writing in the registers of pragmatic literacy, written languages imposed themselves for the purposes of legislation and administration. Whether or not these maritime networks qualified for the distinction of 'empires' remains to be seen. Only very few of them may have aspired to empire building. But I would like to suggest that this seems to be a problem of definition. In the Introduction to this volume, it is suggested that the insular world of the Scandinavian "Sea Kings" may be considered an 'imperial system.' If cultural and political diversity is considered to be more important than administrative unity as a characteristic of 'empire', then the maritime networks that have been discussed above from the point of view of their language may indeed be considered 'imperial systems'. I have argued that, for such systems to survive, some sort of common language is necessary. The cultural and linguistic diversity encountered in empires of the sea may have been at least as important as their political diversity. If within an imperial system there was political hegemony as well, this was not necessarily twinned with linguistic hegemony, as the choice of a language that was adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different, i.e. a *lingua franca*, seems to have been made mainly on pragmatic grounds. Especially on the shores of the Irish Sea and the Baltic the possibilities were limited because of the perceived difficulty of many of the native languages spoken there. In the North Atlantic, on the other hand, the Nordic languages could be readily understood by all. The French language used by sailors on the Irish sea was only coincidentally linked to the French

of the power elite that came to dominate its shores; the (Low) German of the Baltic was a language of trade before it could become, on the southern shores, a language of political hegemony; and the language of the North Atlantic simply was the only language available. Things were less clear cut on the (southern) shores of the North Sea. We find trade networks there as in the Baltic, but whether these networks would merit to be called "imperial systems" is hardly ever clear. What is clear, however, is that for empires of the sea to be viable at all, their linguistic diversity needed to be accompanied by some mutual comprehension, if only to deal with the practicalities of life at sea, trading, and the incipient attempts at state formation that were suggested to members of the groups that could claim political hegemony.

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CHAPTER 8

Medieval Denmark as a Maritime Empire

Thomas K. Heebøll-Holm

Introduction

In the Middle Ages (*c.* 500–*c.* 1500) Denmark arguably was the centre of not one, but three successive empires. The first was the Great North Sea Empire, which existed from 1016 to 1046. It encompassed Denmark, England, Norway and, probably, parts of Sweden. After the reigns of king Cnut the Great and his son, Harthacnut, the empire fell apart and its respective territories reverted to their original state as kingdoms of England, Denmark and Norway.[1] The second Danish empire lasted from 1157 to 1332. It was founded by king Valdemar I and is sometimes called the Valdemarian Kingdom or Empire, while the rulers are known as the Valdemarians. This empire collapsed in the 1320s – not because of foreign invasions, but because of a royal debt crisis caused by a policy of pledging the various Danish provinces to German creditors as security for loans. From 1332 to 1340, the kingdom of Denmark had ceased to exist in all but name. In 1340, Valdemar IV was elected king, and he eventually succeeded in reconstituting the kingdom through a combination of warfare and the redeeming of pledges. He thereby laid the groundwork for the third Danish empire, which came into existence in the reign if his daughter, the illustrious Queen Margaret I. In 1397, Margaret orchestrated the creation of the Kalmar Union which united the kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden under her grand-nephew and designated successor, Erik the Pomeranian. Though Sweden definitively seceded from the Union in 1523, this empire lasted until 1814 when Norway became a Swedish protectorate.

In this chapter I argue that of these medieval empires only one merits the combination of the terms, 'Danish' and 'maritime empire'. This is the Valdemarian empire. While the empire of Cnut the Great was indeed maritime, it is debatable if it should be termed Danish. Cnut may well have considered himself as much English as Danish and in any case, England was clearly the most important part of his empire. The Kalmar Union, though dominated by a Danish royal lineage, was neither in name nor in function a Danish empire properly

1 Murray 2004, 289; Rüdiger 2012, 93–103. On the North Sea empire of Cnut, see Lawson 1993. For a broader treatment of Denmark as an empire throughout the ages, see Bregnsbo and Jensen 2005.

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speaking: it rather was a political union of three separate kingdoms under a single ruler. In contrast the Valdemarian empire was founded on Danish naval might and control with the waterways connecting the Baltic and the North Sea areas. Indeed, ships and waterways was what kept the empire together.

In examining the maritime empire of the Valdemarians, I shall first discuss the geography of Denmark and how it influenced Denmark's development as a maritime empire. This will be followed by a discussion of Valdemarian Denmark politically, economically and culturally from 1157 to 1332. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the specific characteristics of this Danish maritime empire.

The Geography of the Danish Medieval Kingdom

Geographically speaking medieval Denmark was extremely well-placed for seeking political and economic power through maritime might. The medieval kingdom of Denmark was terrestrially framed between the Jutland peninsula and the southern Swedish peninsula consisting of the provinces of Scania, Halland and Blekinge. Between these lay two major islands, Zealand and Funen, and an archipelago of hundreds of bigger and smaller islands. Thus geographically the medieval Danish kingdom functioned as a sort of gateway of straits or as Kurt Villads Jensen has termed it: a delta between the Baltic Sea area and the North Sea.[2] Furthermore, Villads Jensen stresses that,

> the many islands separated by water also necessitated the development of a sea-based military organisation, dependent on fast-moving warships. The many river outlets and fjords and the great number of very small islands to hide behind often made raiding on ships a much more profitable and rational way of conducting war than employing large-scale land-based troops.[3]

Thus, the medieval Danish kingdom was ideally suited for – and to a certain degree depended on – control of the traffic between west and east. This was also the key component of its strength throughout the Middle Ages, where Denmark arguably was the single most powerful kingdom in Scandinavia and the Baltic Rim region.[4] When it was strong it could lord over all the other realms

2 Jensen 2002a, 176.

3 *Ibid.*, 176.

4 Defined by Nils Blomkvist thus 'the surrounding territories, defined in a concrete sense by the waters flowing into the [Baltic] Sea'. Blomkvist 2005, 4.

in the region, but even when weak, it still commanded formidable resources. It is thus symptomatic that what brought the Valdemarian Empire down were not foreign invasions, but internal strife and a debt crisis.

In sum, high medieval Denmark was a realm concentrated on the control of a number of straits. The kingdom had enough farmland to feed and sustain the power of the empire, but seemingly there was never an overcapacity of people who were willing to actually colonise the regions it subdued in the Baltic Rim. Probably for that reason the Valdemarians focused on extending and maintaining their control over the richest parts of the Baltic Rim, namely the northern German principalities and the trade routes to Russia. In other words, they were more interested in controlling already functioning (and profitable) regions than establishing settlements of Danes abroad.

The imperial maritime expansion was facilitated by the ready and widespread availability of ships for both trade and warfare, the so-called longships. These were actually of a rather diverse build with some clearly meant for war whereas others were better suited for cargo transport. What they had in common was that the means of propulsion was oars and sails in contrast to the high medieval cogs that were only driven by wind power. The first Valdemarian expansion relied on the oar-sails, but in the thirteenth century the cog increasingly became the dominant vessel at sea (though the oar-sail ships were never completely abandoned).[5] It should be noted that throughout the Middle Ages most of these ships were owned by magnates and merchants. The king's own naval power was probably not impressive. Thus, around 1200 the king owned but five percent of the landmass of the kingdom, which was about the same as the wealthiest magnates and ecclesiastics. Yet during the thirteenth century the kings acquired more power and in the later Middle Ages, the king had assumed control of twelve percent of the Danish landmass. This land was administered by royal officers residing in castles and furthermore these were responsible for supplying men and ships for the military.[6]

A Maritime Empire?

So in what way can we conceive of the Valdemarian kingdom as a maritime Empire? Well first off, one has to bear in mind the somewhat composite nature of medieval kingdoms and principalities. As James Muldoon has put it,

5 Englert 2004, 111–119; Bill 2003, 35–51.

6 Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 300–301, 319.

> when a king [...] identified himself as an emperor what they [rulers] meant was that these rulers had conquered equally powerful kings and were thus king of kings [...] Although a medieval ruler might not employ imperial language, he could be labelled an emperor in the sense that he ruled over a variety of territories that he and his family acquired over time ... all the major medieval kingdoms, consisting as they did of a conglomeration of dynastic lands, were empires whether or not anyone chose to employ the term.[7]

Furthermore, from a political and theological point of view the Roman Empire had never really ceased to exist. According to the *translatio imperii* theory, the empire merely shifted location from Rome and Constantinople to the Western Europe kingdoms. While this theory was developed by and was mostly propagated by ecclesiastics in politico-legal debates it was no mere exercise in scholastics. Rather empire mattered because it was a precondition for the Apocalypse and the Second Coming of Christ.[8]

In general terms it makes sense to conceive of the Valdemarian empire as centre and periphery along the lines proposed by R. W. Runciman. He defines empires as polities that

> involve the exercise of domination by the rulers of a central society over the populations of peripheral societies without either absorbing them to the point that they become fellow-members of the central society or disengaging from them to the point that they become confederates rather than subjects. [...] The peripheries may be colonies or vassals or tributaries or clients of the centre. But the most useful single word for the relationship [between centre and periphery] is 'protectorate [...] a convenient state between annexation and mere alliance.[9]

In following this theory, the centre of the Valdemarian empire would be the Jutish and Swedish peninsulas and the archipelago dominated by Zealand. The peripheries would be the subjugated realms on the Baltic Rim: the Wendish and German principalities and Estonia.

However, these approaches are mostly land-based, and are somewhat unsatisfactory when trying to define a maritime empire. A key factor is of course

7 Muldoon 1999, 141–142.

8 *Ibid*, 25, 72–74, 97. For an example of the eschatological aspects of empire, see for instance, Tombeur 2015.

9 Runciman 2011, 99.

that the seas do not only function as natural borders, but just as much as connectors for an empire with maritime might. A classic example of this would be Roman Empire's control over the Mediterranean – the *mare nostrum* – but also Greek *poleis* such as Athens controlled maritime empires in the form of colonies and leagues of federated, but ultimately subservient, leagues of *poleis* such as the Delian League.[10] Picking up from here, in the recent decades an alternative term for kingdoms, states and empires based on maritime power and whose cohesive medium was the sea, has come up: the thalassocracy. A useful definition has been suggested by David Abulafia: 'it is understood to mean an empire that not merely crosses the sea to tie together scattered dominions, exercising some degree of control over the sea'[11] and 'If we use the term loosely to describe empires with a significant maritime component – empires that drew wealth from trade, empires that were so physically dispersed that they depended on maritime communication – then the term has some meaning.'[12] Further Abulafia stresses the importance of islands, commerce and trade networks in the foundation and maintenance of such sea empires. In a thalassocracy the rulers and the merchant-mariners usually do not initially have the same goals. For the rulers, what matters most is pursuit of dynastic interests in a more general sense and more narrowly of a desire to control valuable resources or profit from trade routes. To achieve this control, the rulers strove to control key ports and overseas bases and to develop an ability to patrol narrow stretches of water – for instance straits.[13] In contrast, the commercial activity often predates or develops alongside the rulers' naval ambitions and may initially have different goals from that of the rulers. However, such private enterprises should not be viewed as pacific. Rather, there is a close connection between piracy and trade, where piracy – to paraphrase Carl von Clausewitz – functions as a continuation of trade by other means. Indeed, Abulafia suggests that piracy formed the foundation of the power of the medieval Italian city-republics.[14] However, though the interests of the rulers and the merchants-cum-pirates may initially have been different, they also had mutual interests. For instance, in the Catalan maritime empire of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, 'the king may not have gone out of his way to promote trade when he initiated his conquests, but he knew how to make a fortune out of trade once his merchants were in place.'[15]

10 Rüdiger 2012, 93–94.
11 Abulafia 2014, 139.
12 *Ibid*, 151.
13 *Ibid*, 150, 152.
14 Abulafia 2014, 141–42; Heebøll-Holm 2013, 25, 83–90; Gabrielsen 2013, 147–153.
15 Abulafia 2014, 149.

In what follows, I will analyse the Valdemarian empire as a thalassocracy along the lines proposed by Abulafia. Furthermore, I shall pay special attention to the role played by non-royal groups such as the Danish magnates (nobles and bishops) and commercial guilds in the empire. Moreover, and bearing in mind the special status of empires in the Middle Ages, I shall stress that the Danish empire rested more on the royal person and office than on the realm as a territory and people.

The Rise and Fall of a Maritime Empire

The maritime empire of the Valdemarians rose out of the ashes of a bloody war of succession. The Danish kings in the tenth and eleventh century were slowly but surely beginning to establish a more centralised rule of the kingdom. This process had begun under the reign of King Harald Bluetooth (958–986/87), but in the following century the power of the kings waxed and waned, and basically they were but *primi inter pares*. This was in no small part due to the fact that Denmark was an electoral kingdom meaning that any king had to be formally elected by the people (i.e. the magnates) at the *things* of Viborg (Jutland), Lund (Scania) and Ringsted (Zealand). Furthermore, while in general the kingship was passed on along family lines it did not follow *primogeniture*. Thus, when in 1103 King Erik III died *en route* to the Holy Land, his brother Niels succeeded him on the throne though Erik had a son, Cnut Lavard. Eventually it came to blows. In 1131 Cnut Lavard was murdered by his cousin, and this started the succession wars which lasted from 1131 to 1157. After twenty-eight years of internecine wars which had exterminated a substantial part of the extended royal family, Cnut Lavard's son, Valdemar I (1157–1182), could assume the Danish throne. During these wars, the Wends, a Slav people living on the south-western coasts of the Baltic Sea had seized the opportunity to attack and plunder a weakened and war-torn Denmark. Consequently, one of the first actions of Valdemar was to launch a series of military campaigns to reverse the Wendish threat against Denmark and to bring the various factions of the Danish nobility together against a common foe. These wars were cast as crusades though the evidence for a full-fledged crusade is debatable.[16] Nevertheless they were certainly understood by Danish contemporaries as holy wars to protect and ultimately expand Christendom in the North. These wars, today called the Wendish Wars or Crusades, lasted from 1159 to 1185 and were carried out through annual maritime

16 Tyerman 2008, 108, 175–187.

raids against the Wendish coasts. Two campaigns were especially noteworthy, namely the one in 1168 against the island of Rügen which resulted in the complete subjugation of it under the Danish crown, and the campaign against Pomerania in 1184–85 which made the dukes of Pomerania swear allegiance to the Danish king. By 1185 most of the Wendish principalities along the Baltic Rim had accepted the king of Denmark as their lord. As a consequence, Valdemar I's son and successor, King Cnut VI, sometime in the 1180s assumed the title: *Dei gracia Danorum Sclavorumque rex* – by grace of God king of the Danes and the Slavs (i.e. Wends).[17] These campaigns took place in competition with the Saxon *Ostsiedlung* under Duke Henry the Lion.[18] Due to the downfall of Henry in 1181, the Danish king emerged as the strongest ruler in Northern Europe.[19]

1185–1241: the Apogee of the Empire

In the following decades, the Danish kings Cnut VI and especially his brother and successor, King Valdemar II continued to expand Danish dominion in Northern Germany and along the southern Baltic Rim from Hamburg to Prussia. In the first decade of the thirteenth century the German principalities and towns north of the Elbe and Elde rivers – most notably amongst these, Lübeck – accepted the Danish king as their overlord. The crowning moment of this expansion was when Emperor Frederick II in 1214 acknowledged and confirmed Danish lordship over these German areas.[20] Furthermore, Valdemar II and the Danes conducted several crusades against the pagans in the Baltic, notably the Prussians, the Livonians and the Estonians. The apogee of this imperial expansion was Valdemar's conquest of Estonia in 1219 with an army comprising Danish, German and Wendish nobles and warriors.[21] In this process of imperial expansion the Danes had become increasingly "Germanised" as expressed by the German chronicler, Arnold of Lübeck. Around 1200 he praised the Danes for their adoption of German fashion and chivalry, and he wrote that they now had become as skilful in mounted chivalrous warfare as they were in fighting on board ships.[22] However, soon after this success Valdemar and the Danish empire suffered a reversal of fortunes. In 1223 Valdemar II and his son were treacherously captured by their vassal; count Henry of Schwerin, while hunting on the Danish island of Lyø. They were finally ransomed in 1225

17 Jensen 2002a, 179.
18 Bartlett 1993, 112–114.
19 Murray 2004, 291–292.
20 Jensen 2002b, 179; Murray 2004, 294.
21 In 1269, the kings of Denmark added *et dux Estoniae* (duke of Estonia) to their title. Skyum-Nielsen 1994, I 91.
22 Heebøll-Holm 2012b, 131.

and in 1227 Valdemar led an army south to punish Henry and his German allies. It did not end well as the Danes were defeated at Bornhöved in Holstein and most of the German princes and towns including Lübeck renounced their allegiance to the Danish king.[23] In Danish historiography this has traditionally been seen a near-death blow to the Danish imperial ambitions, yet to my mind, while certainly weakened by this defeat and a temporary loss in the 1220s of Estonia to the Crusading Order, the Swordbrothers, the Danes still retained control over the trade in the area and the naval power of the Danes remained a force to be reckoned with. Thus, in 1238 Estonia was recovered, the princes of Rügen remained loyal to the Crown,[24] and in the 1220s and 1230s Valdemar II on several occasions conducted political and naval pressure on Lübeck by blocking the river Trave, and Danish guilds continued to dominate in the Baltic Rim. A further testament to Danish power was that Valdemar II's successor, his son Erik IV, in 1240 was offered the throne of the Holy Roman Empire – albeit as a contender to Emperor Frederick II. Wisely, Erik declined.[25]

1241–1295: Fratricide, Regicide and Internecine Wars

The succession crisis after the death of Valdemar IV exposed a structural problem in the Danish empire. While Erik IV was made king, his brother Abel, who had been made Duke of Schleswig soon challenged his brother's rule. Thus, Erik's reign was characterised by his military campaigns to fight his brother and to consolidate Danish rule over Estonia. However, in 1250 he was murdered, probably by Abel, who then proclaimed himself king. His reign was brief for two years later he was killed while campaigning in Frisia, and his brother Christopher assumed the throne though Abel's son Valdemar also claimed it. Now began the struggle for the Danish throne between the descendants of Abel and Christopher. The second half of the thirteenth century was characterised by low-level wars between the contenders and their allies amongst the princes and towns in Northern Germany. Especially Lübeck's attack on Copenhagen in 1249 as allies of Abel seems portentous as it formally signalled the ascendance of Lübeck as the primary maritime power in the Baltic Rim.[26] Nonetheless, the Danish empire remained largely intact and though no serious expansion took place, neither did it shrink. However, both in the north and in the south contenders began to rise. From the 1260s an increasingly self-confident Norwegian

23 Murray 2004, 294.

24 Rügen remained an island under the Danish king until 1325 when the prince of Rügen swore allegiance to Pomerania. Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 374. Havn 2016, 107–109.

25 Murray 2004, 298–299.

26 For this attack, see: Corsi 2012.

kingdom began to meddle in Danish affairs. In the 1280s Norway waged a war of intense maritime raiding on Denmark which from 1287 happened in alliance with the so-called "Outlaws". The Outlaws were a group of powerful noblemen accused of the murder of the Danish King Erik V in 1286. The Outlaws claimed innocence (and may well have been framed for the murder) and fled to Norway, where King Erik II took up the defence of their cause as it fitted well with his own ambitions. These two parties conducted a number of destructive naval raids against the Danish delta. However, little was achieved politically and ultimately in 1295 the Danish King Erik VI Menved was able to negotiate a peace which initially satisfied Norwegian ambitions though without causing a significant weakening of the Danish Crown.[27]

Concurrently with these events, northern German princes and towns were drawn deeper and deeper into Danish politics. Thus, the years from 1241–1295 saw the Danish kings and their kinsmen and rivals manoeuvring in a bewildering web of alliances and counter-alliances with foreign powers. Foremost amongst these players were the Hanseatic towns in terms of increasing control of the vital trade networks and the counts of Holstein, who from the last decades of the thirteenth century came to play an increasingly central role as powerbrokers in Danish politics.

1295–1332: Imperial Boom and Bust

After the peace of 1295 Erik VI Menved resumed the expansionistic policy of the founders of the empire, albeit with other means and less success. In his defence, he faced a host of formidable opponents, and politics in Scandinavia and the Baltic Rim had descended into a confusing web of alliances, counter-alliances and betrayals. It is impossible to go into details with this aspect here. Suffice to say that the main players were Erik himself, the dukes of Schleswig, Jacob – another royal kinsmen enfeoffed with the County of Northern Halland, the Outlaws, the kings of Norway, the king of Sweden, the Swedish king's rebellious brothers, the counts of Holstein, the princes of Mecklenburg and finally the increasingly powerful Hanseatic towns led by Lübeck.

In the period between 1295 and 1319 Erik allied with Holstein and Mecklenburg, fortified Estonia and caused Riga and the Livonian provinces of Semgallia, Valexe and Gerzike to become a Danish protectorate from 1299 to 1304. Furthermore, during the first two decades of the fourteenth century he extended his dominion over Lübeck, Rostock, Wismar, Greifswald and

27 Albrechtsen, 102–104, Fagerland 2002, 69–96. For Norwegian foreign policy in this period, see Bagge 2010, 85–101.

Stralsund and waged numerous wars in Sweden and Northern Germany. By the time of his death he had largely managed to maintain Denmark's position as the foremost power in Scandinavia and the Baltic Rim as is evidenced from contemporary German court literature where Erik was hailed as a mighty and most honourable king.[28] It is not unlikely that he could have commenced another period of imperial expansion, but he died childless which paved the way for the final and destructive wars of succession between the king's kinsmen.

The military operations and foreign policies of Erik were to a certain extent financed by a royal policy of pledging estates and indeed different parts of Denmark to German creditors. Traditionally, historians have assumed that this policy *de facto* bankrupted Denmark already during the reign of Erik VI. Consequently, all his successors could do was to dig the hole deeper in their search for means to keep the kingdom afloat. However, this view has recently been challenged. Anders Leegaard Knudsen has convincingly demonstrated that Erik VI in fact kept the pledging under control and continually was able to redeem pledged lands. Though the economy was not strong, Denmark was not bankrupt. What spelled the end of the Valdemarian kingdom were the struggles between the successors, Christoffer II and Erik III, wars in Northern Germany and rebellions led by the Danish magnates. To deal with these, Christoffer II in particular continued the pledging of the provinces of Denmark to the counts of Holstein. By 1332 these de facto owned the Danish kingdom.[29] Thus, it took the combined efforts of failed military adventures abroad, renewed internecine wars and a country pushed to rebellion by war-taxes to bring about the end of the Valdemarian empire.

The Dynamics of the Danish Imperial Expansion

Commerce and the Empire

The position of the Danish kingdom as centred on a delta and exercising its power largely through ships hinged in great part on the international trade networks in and out of the Baltic. The rise of the Valdemarian empire had a reciprocal relationship with a fundamental change in this trade. Around 1200

28 Albrechtsen 2001, 104–110; Skyum-Nielsen 1994, I 152–155; Murray 2004, 304–306; Lind 1996, 14, 16. For a discussion of Erik VI Menved's policies see Andersson 1954; Hørby 1977. To my knowledge there is no in-depth treatment of this period available in English.

29 Albrechtsen 2001, 110–112; Knudsen 2008, 338–339.

Danish international trade shifted from being based on plunder- and tribute-taking to a commercial economy.[30] As expressed by Nils Hybel and Bjørn Poulsen:

> Merchant guilds, the spread of non-oared cargo ships, the growth of cargo vessels, and the emergence of a medieval kingdom of Denmark indicate commercial accumulation and richer, more professional merchants. Commodity exchange increasingly became a trade in its own right, quite distinct from military and agricultural occupations.[31]

The imperial policy of the Valdemarians aimed at controlling the maritime trade routes in the Baltic and beyond. In a sense, Denmark was at the centre of this trade web not only due to the delta, but also because its own primary resources were fish, most of all herring. While the Scanian herring markets were important already around 1200 in the following two centuries they never ceased to grow and by the 1370s may have been the single largest seasonal market in Northern Europe.[32] The Valdemarians extended their power over the trade routes by focusing on the southwestern Baltic Rim with its access through rivers to the German markets and east to control the trade coming into the Baltic from Novgorod in Russia. In order to gain control of the latter, the Danes had to establish safe harbours in the Baltic Rim. Probably for this reason Valdemar I in 1177 supported the Danish Guild of St. Cnut on the island of Gotland, and the crusades of Valdemar II were at least in part motivated by a desire to control this trade. The importance of the trade routes from Gotland, Estonia and Novgorod in Russia cannot be stressed enough. Next to trade on Scanian fairs, trade on Novgorod was the most important source of income around 1300 for Lübeck and the Hansa. In Estonia, the Danes founded Talinn/Reval which functioned as an important port for the Novgorod trade.[33]

This change in the Danish economy is reflected in the increased urbanisation Denmark witnessed from the late twelfth century until approximately 1270. Before the twelfth century Danish towns were situated at some distance from the coasts to avoid raiders. By the reign of Cnut VI and the subjugation of the Wends, most new towns were built much closer to the shores. Moreover, the reign of the Valdemarians was accompanied by a boom in new towns and many of these were built on royal lands which indicate a royal protection.

30 Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 50–51, 236.
31 Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 361–362.
32 Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 53, 243; Jahnke 2000, 90–94.
33 Lind 1996, 11, 13.

Indeed, several new towns came about as a consequence of the building of royal castles at strategically important locations in the delta such as Nyborg and Kalundborg in Big Belt and Vordingborg with access to the southern Danish archipelago and the Wendish territories. Especially the town of Schleswig which had been an international trade centre from 1087 onward seems to have benefitted from the royal protection and the change in economy. Even though it eventually was eclipsed by the German Hanseatic towns, there is good reason to believe that Schleswig and the many other Danish towns intensified their trade with the Baltic Rim prior to 1227.[34] Before 1200 trade in the Baltic had been dominated by Scandinavians, Friesians, Russians and merchants from Gotland, but by 1250 German merchants had definitively taken over the commercial and increasingly also naval hegemony in the Baltic Rim.[35] This takeover may well be linked to the crisis in governance in the Valdemarian empire. However, despite the governmental turmoil and political unrest in Denmark after 1250 and a definitive German dominance of the international trade networks, Danish towns and trade continued to thrive and expand unabatedly.

Indeed, between 1242 and 1320 there was a rapid expansion in the Danish coin economy.[36] It should be noted though that the transition from a tributary economy to a commercial one did not happen overnight. The Danish Provincial Laws from the first decades of the thirteenth century shows the persistence of slavery and slave-taking in Danish military enterprises abroad. Seemingly not until the middle of the century did this practice finally die out, though it is unclear how pervasive slavery was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[37]

Expansion Abroad to Consolidate Rule at Home

The surge of and fundamental change in Danish trade went hand in hand with Valdemar I and his sons' consolidation of power. Twenty-six years of internecine wars between royal contenders and their kinsmen and allies in the Danish aristocracy had led to long harboured grudges which did not go away with Valdemar's ascension to the throne. Indeed, throughout the second part of the twelfth century the Valdemarians continually had to nib rival claims in the bud.[38] In that regard, annual (successful) military campaigns against foreign enemies served to bring the warring factions together. This united the magnate factions under the king in external campaigns which furthermore seems

34 Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 232–239 and 242.
35 Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 357.
36 Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 345.
37 Karras 1988, 137–138, 148–150.
38 Hermanson 2013; Heebøll-Holm 2015, 42–48.

to have brought much wealth to the warriors in the form of spoils of war taken from the defeated. This feeling of unity and strength of purpose must have been fed by the idea of the wars against the Wends as crusades or holy wars in defence of Christendom.[39] Indeed in terms of ideology, the kings, magnates and warriors of the Valdemarian empire seems driven by two somewhat contradictory ideals: the deeds of the Vikings and a pious Christian faith.

In much of the Danish high medieval history-writing, the deeds of the Viking are often evoked as an ideal, perhaps most strongly in the crusader chronicle *Historia de Profectione Danorum in Hierosolymam* from around 1200. It recounts that upon hearing about the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin's forces in 1187, one of the most important magnates and supporters of the Valdemarians, Esbern Snare, at a Christmas feast in Odense urged the assembled magnates and the king to take the cross. In this speech Esbern reminded the assembly of their ancestors' glorious conquests from Antiquity to the Viking Age, and he stressed how the Danes had been feared by the Greeks and the Romans, had conquered the Lombards, destroyed Normandy, ruled England and Norway and dominated the Slavs in the Baltic Rim. In these endeavours to subject the world to their rule, the Danes had faced countless dangers. However since they were pagans, it had wrongly been motivated by a desire for vainglorious fame rather than piously fighting for justice and Christendom. The military campaigns themselves however were to be lauded. This passage unites a pagan past of the Danes as imperial sea-warriors with a present as pious crusaders.[40]

The head propagandist of the Valdemarians, Saxo Grammaticus, author of the *Gesta Danorum*, throughout this chronicle stressed the imperial legacy of the Danes from Antiquity. Indeed, the narrative of his chronicle was of how the Danish empire had come into being at the same time as the Roman and how the Danes and the Romans effectively had divided Europe in two; Rome ruled in the south and the west, the Danes in the north (including England!) and the east. Furthermore, the chronicle – which was written in Latin – was seeped in imperial Roman language. In the chronicle mastery of the sea played a pivotal role in the power of the Danes and their kings from beginning to end and it explained that it had always been through naval power that the Danes had extended their dominion over other peoples.[41]

Ideologically holy war also played a big role in Saxo's chronicle. One sign of this was the freebooter association of Roskilde under the command of a certain Wetheman. This association shall be dealt with further below. Suffice

39 Jensen 2002a, 192.
40 Heebøll-Holm 2012a, 142.
41 Heebøll-Holm 2012a, 155–159.

to say here that the association exemplified the marriage of pious Christian warfare with the naval raiding of the Vikings. Another example of Saxo's view of the holy maritime war is in his portrayal of the main hero of his chronicle: (Arch)bishop Absalon of Lund, leader of the mighty Hvide kin group. Saxo presented him thus:

> No sooner was he [Absalon] elected bishop than he began to act as much like a sea rover as a spiritual father, for he thought little of protecting the Church within, if he allowed it to be endangered from without. Driving off the enemies of the state religion is just as important a part of priestly duties as safeguarding its ceremonies. So, in order to defend his country with stronger surveillance, Absalon continually kept watch over the seas, and, since most of the bishop's quarters had been levelled with the ground, at times he would find a place to stay in the leafy woods.[42]

Throughout the chronicle Absalon is as much praised for his fighting as his preaching. To take one example, Saxo reported how Absalon called off religious service when a Pomeranian fleet was spotted:

> [...] he [Absalon] avidly roused the fleet and set its course to intercept the enemy at sea, and making an offering to God not of prayers, but of arms. For what kind of sacrifice could we consider more pleasing to the Almighty than the slaughter of wicked men.[43]

However, the Danish conquests did not entail any significant colonisation. In addition to a lack of manpower, this may also reflect that Valdemarians in fact had little interest in meddling in local affairs; as long as people paid their dues to the king and remained loyal, he did not interfere in local customs and rules. Instead the permanent implantation and maintenance of a Danish presence was handled by monasteries going out from Denmark, but at least in some cases populated by Frenchmen. These served as the frontrunners of the Danish presence on the Baltic Rim in the twelfth century.[44] In this capacity they may well have eased the Danish control and contrary to the German *Ostsiedlung* there were no Slav revolts against Danish overlordship. On the downside, monasteries were loyal not to the Danish king, but to the popes and though they were daughter monasteries of Danish abbeys, they were not the king's men per

42 Saxo Grammaticus 2015, 14.21.3.
43 Saxo Grammaticus 2015, 16.5.1.; Heebøll-Holm 2012a, 162–164.
44 Szacherska 1977; Riis 2003, 39, 47.

se. The crusades against the Balts from c. 1200 to 1221 were in part headed by the archbishop of Lund, Andrew Sunesen, nephew of and successor to Archbishop Absalon. By his alliance with Valdemar II, the kingdom and the church united forces which permitted the conquest of the island of Ösel in 1206 and Estonia in 1219. While the king in these efforts was nominally the warlord, in essence the church not only was in charge of the mission in these pagan areas, but also much of the financial and organisational management of the new territories.[45]

The Magnates, the Guilds and the Pirates

The Valdemarian imperial expansion was to a large part not only supported but also fueled by the magnate kin groups of the Danish kingdom. In the words of Saxo Grammaticus (talking about Danish magnates in the 1180s):

> all the bravest individuals among the Scanians and Zealanders were grumbling about their too-quiet life in peacetime and complaining that amidst all this repose they were now running into slothfulness; their wills were being sapped through long indulgence in pleasures, whereas under King Valdemar it had been their custom to spin out almost the entire year in a wide variety of activities and different types of military service. The sinews of military vigour, they said, are dulled and enfeebled by ease, whereas employment tautens and invigorates them. For this reason a corporate decision was made to launch a pirating expedition against the Estlanders with a view to sharpening the edge of their valour.[46]

These warriors that Saxo wrote about were most probably the men of magnate kin groups of the Danish kingdom. They seem to have possessed considerable military resources – not the least naval power, but increasingly also heavy cavalry. Moreover, they were willing to use these forces in royal as well private military campaigns in the Baltic.[47] It is important to note that the power of the kin groups lay not only in their military might – they also mostly controlled the Danish church. The foremost of these was the kin group of the Hvide. They owed their rise to power to a close alliance with the Valdemarians in the first seventy years of that dynasty's reign.[48] In the twelfth century the Hvide were headed by King Valdemar's foster brother, Absalon. In 1157 he became Bishop

45 Nielsen 2001.
46 Saxo 2015, 16.4.3; Heebøll-Holm 2012a, 158.
47 Lind 2004, 147–59, 199–219; Heebøll-Holm 2012b, 116–121.
48 For more on this kin group, see: Danstrup 1946; Hermanson 2000.

of Roskilde and in 1178 Metropolitan Archbishop of Lund. Absalon and his kinsmen–notably his nephews, Peter and Andrew Sunesen–were very influential at the Danish royal court. Indeed, the Hvide were likely the most powerful magnates in Denmark as they not only were the close allies of the kings, but also owned vast amounts of land and maintained *de facto* control of the Danish church.[49] The influence of the Hvide was not concentrated on the church though. It also extended to a considerable military might. Thus in 1208 they supplied a private army to support their kinsman King Sverker II of Sweden.[50] Though it would seem that the Danish aristocracy remained powerful throughout the thirteenth century their influence with the kings became increasingly challenged by German nobles – some of whom were the kings' kinsmen by marriage.

It was not just the magnates of Denmark that supported and participated in the Danish kings' wars in the Baltic Rim. It seems that people from the Danish towns – and especially the elite – participated. One such group of people was the freebooters or more correctly the private association of mariners and merchants under the command of the already mentioned Wetheman. Their association was formed on a local initiative and as a reaction to the Wendish attacks on Danish coasts and shipping. Wetheman and his associates used Roskilde as their base of operations. Here they could impress ships, provided the owners got a share of the loot, and if they lacked money, the citizens of Roskilde could take shares in the loot by financing their raids. Wetheman's freebooters were lightly equipped and only brought the bare necessities to sail quickly and to leave hold-space for the maximum amount of loot possible. As good Christians, they confessed their sins before they went on a raid and they split the gains equally amongst themselves. When they liberated Christian prisoners, they gave them clothes and let them return to their homes. While the association originated in Roskilde, Saxo writes that it quickly spread to the rest of the coastal settlements of Zealand.[51] When Valdemar I commenced his annual military campaigns against the Wends in 1159, Wetheman and his crew actively assisted the king. Inexplicably Wetheman disappears from Saxo's account sometime in the late 1160s. This may have been because he had died or retired. However, it is more likely that he and his crew became integrated with the nationwide guilds of Saint Cnut that sprang up in Danish towns sometime in the twelfth century. These were sponsored by the Valdemarians for the guild's patron saint was Valdemar I's father, Duke Cnut Lavard, canonized in 1170.

49 Ulsig 2000, 91–92.
50 Kroman 1980, 14, 85, 104, 110.
51 Heebøll-Holm 2012a, 164–166.

According to Cnut Lavard's *vita*, he had been an ardent defender of Christendom against the Wends. He was thus a military saint (perhaps inspired by Byzantine saints – Valdemar I was Russian on his mother's side), but he was also Duke of the town of Schleswig and as such protector of merchants and trade as well.[52] And this was what the guilds of Saint Cnut seemingly was: associations of merchants and mariners, who like their Viking ancestors considered trade a business that could be conducted both with peaceful and with violent means depending on what was most convenient. The statutes of the guilds reflect the members' bellicose propensities as they in general are more concerned with violence and the protection of fellow members against aggressions than with trade privileges.[53] In 1177 Valdemar I extended his protection to and indeed became a member of the Gotland branch of the guild, which seems to have been the spearhead of Danish expansion in the eastern Baltic.[54] This connection to the Valdemarians went deeper than just a royal sponsorship. Lars Bisgaard's study of the guild indicates that from the start it enjoyed an exceptionally privileged relationship with the kings. No other guild in Scandinavia had such a close relationship with the king. For instance, in the twelfth century they were the only guild allowed the right to put seals on their official documents. Furthermore, the guilds seem to have sprung up where there were royal castles. Accordingly, they were not necessarily connected to towns and trade. Thus the guild of St. Cnut was present in Kalundborg, Vordingborg and Nyborg that had started as royal castles and then evolved into towns, but it was also present in Søborg Castle which never developed into a town. Bisgaard writes that the 'earliest guilds of St Knud [...] functioned as a means for the king to retain his rights over towns, exercised through his castles,'[55] and he further stresses that it is difficult to separate 'religious duties, royal control, town government and trade considerations'.[56]

Thus, in the last decades of the twelfth century and the first of the thirteenth century the Danish kings Valdemar I, Cnut VI and Valdemar II managed to bring all the German and Wendish realms from Lübeck to the Duchy of Pomerania under their dominion through the assistance of Danish magnates and merchant adventurers perhaps from the Guild of St. Cnut. The apogee of this maritime empire was the successful crusade to Estonia. Though the empire

52 Jensen 2002b, 65, 71, Bisgaard 2018, 212. For saint Cnut Lavard as a crusader, see also Friis-Jensen 2006.

53 Jensen 2002b, 70.

54 *Ibid.*, 72–76.

55 Bisgaard 2018, 212.

56 *Ibid.*, 212.

suffered a horrible blow with the defeat to the German princes at Bornhöved, the maritime dimension to the realm survived and Valdemar II continued in the 1230s to be able to mobilize considerable maritime might and to keep ambitious Lübeck in check. Eventually in the 1240s and 50s with the definitive take-over of the Baltic trade by the German Hansa, the guilds and the kings seems to have parted ways. It is impossible to tell whether this was due to the unrest and king's mistrusting or losing control over guilds or whether the guilds themselves with the shift to a commercial economy increasingly found it unprofitable to continue as merchants-cum-pirates.[57] Finally this may also be connected to the change in the military structure of the Danish empire and an increasing reliance on German merchants, nobles and soldiers.[58]

Royal Reforms and German Influence

In the thirteenth century, the reliance of the Danish kings on the magnates became increasingly challenged by German princes. In King Valdemar II's Baltic crusades his second in command was his kinsman, the German count Albert of Orlamünde and Holstein. Gradually the counts of Holstein came to play prominent roles in Danish politics, both for and against the king in alliance with the princes of Rügen, the town of Lübeck or the dukes of Schleswig. The Danish kings of the thirteenth-century likewise often married German princesses, which increased the influence of the Germans at court. Finally, there may have been a rise in the use of German knights and soldiers to fight in the Danish kings' wars. At least that is the impression one gets from Erik Menved's wars where near contemporary sources talk of the use of German mercenaries in the Danish king's service.[59] The reason for this shift from Danish magnates fighting for obligation and plunder to German mercenaries and paid Danish armies may well lie with the unrest and the socio-economic changes of the 1240s onwards. It is important to note though that the advent of Germans and German influence and culture was mostly viewed as beneficial by the elite – both royal and magnate – of the Valdemarian empire. There was no inherent ethnic antagonism between the Danish elite and the Germans.[60] So why did the Danish magnates and the Danish commercial elite part ways with the kings?

The most immediate cause for the break was probably the wars between the descendants of Abel and Christopher. These conflicts pitted royal kinsmen

57 Bisgaard 2018, 213.
58 Heebøll-Holm 2012b, 126–132.
59 Fagerland 2002, 99–103.
60 Knudsen 2000, 28.

against each other, who in turn activated a web of Scandinavian and northern German alliances. It also set the Danish magnates and the great lords (church and secular) against each other. Especially the archbishops of Lund in alliance with the Abel lineage continually fought the Danish kings of the Christopher lineage. There was probably also a socio-economic reason for the break. First, it seems that lack of royal control and support of Danish merchants and especially the guilds of St.-Cnut either sped up or ushered in a change in the orientation of the Danish merchants. With the growth of the Scanian fairs and the change to a commercial economy, where trade increasingly became the preserve of professional merchants leaving the provision of protection and the waging of war to the kings and great lords, the Viking–style raider-trader operations may have become increasingly risky compared to the gain. It was safer to remain in home water and tellingly from 1256 the Guild of St. Cnut fixed their annual meeting to take place at the Scanian Fairs.[61] In the same vein the transition in the economy and perhaps under the influence of German courtly culture, the Danish magnates seemed a lot less interested in overseas military and naval campaigns. Though gains were perhaps lower, income by land-exploitation was safer and more reliable. Furthermore, the risk of getting caught up between the king and his rivals may have discouraged a possibly less bellicose and more placid Danish aristocracy. Finally, in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, the costs of both ships and armaments rose thus progressively prohibiting smaller players from taking part in the action. So Baltic trade became the preserve of German merchants and the Danish kings increasingly turned to armed professionals to defend and expand his maritime empire.

An indicator of these changes and the importance of naval matters is readily apparent in the Danish Provincial Laws from c.1200–1241 in the articles concerning *lething* – the military obligation of the Danes to their king. Here the kingdom is organised militarily into *hafnæ* that is 'ports'. Each unit was to supply armed men and ships every four year, and the legal provisions specified number, armament, rules etc. However, these laws were most likely exclusively for the defence of the realm.[62] It seems that the king – like in for instance contemporary France – had to employ other means for mobilising forces for offensive war.[63] Indeed in the twelfth century, the campaigns against the Wends by Valdemar relied not on the *lething*, but voluntary participation by the magnates and towns, and it seems that the earliest in detail known *lething*

61 Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 244.
62 Lund 1996, 252–254.
63 Hélary 2012, 143–146.

is Valdemar I's organisation of a permanent naval patrol against the Wends in 1170 or 71.[64]

There is some uncertainty over whether the *lething* from c. 1250 onwards was in effect merely a tax or if it included active service though most historians today agree that it mainly was a tax.[65] This did not mean that the kingdom was defenceless for another group of low-level nobility or knights, the *herremænd*, were to supply armed service every year and thus constituted a core of Danish professional warriors. However, it is unknown how many *herremænd* there were in the Danish kingdom, and in any case the Law of Jutland from 1241 severely restricted who could employ these warriors.[66] These were the king himself, the duke of Schleswig in his territory, the king's children, friends or counts in their own jurisdictions and fiefs, and finally the bishops in their own dioceses. This limitation on who could lawfully have armed retinues led to conflicts between the king and the Archbishop of Lund in the period from 1256–1303 and levies and taxes to the king certainly became more onerous in the thirteenth century.

In 1304 Erik Menved changed the *lething* definitively into a tax for the defense of the realm which the king used to hire cogs with professional armed crews and supplies for sixteen weeks – far longer and seemingly better trained and equipped than what the Provincial Laws had provided for. This navy was clearly for offensive purposes and in 1316 Erik sent at least forty-five cogs and perhaps 100 oar-sail ships against Stralsund.[67] This reform of the *lething* was accompanied by other financial initiatives of the king to centralize and expand his rule and to fight the kingdom's many enemies. One of these initiatives was to levy extra war taxes, engage in coin manipulations and levy taxes that ignored the church's usual immunity from such royal taxation. This taxation however did not only serve to pay the armies. They also served to finance the building of royal castles which again served to cement royal control. As Hybel and Poulsen write:

> The castles could generally be maintained on the basis of traditional levies paid by freeholders and also by royal tenants but if the king needed larger amounts of cash it was necessary to impose extraordinary taxes. A widespread practice of pledging castles to noble creditors made it even more essential to collect such extraordinary taxes. The taxes were often

64 Lund 1996, 233–36, 245–246.
65 Lund 1996, 248–262, 273–274; Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 304.
66 Rasmussen and Madsen 1999, 82–86.
67 Lund 1996, 255–256, 264–265, 275–284; Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 303.

> the precondition for the king to regain his own castles and thus maintain power in the country.[68]

The continued wars and taxes eventually led to revolts first in 1313 and in the following two decades they grew stronger.[69]

These changes in the *lething* and what seems to have been a growing centralization of royal power was accompanied by and perhaps happened in response to the continuous internecine conflict that characterized the last decades of the Valdemarian empire. As Kurt Villads Jensen writes,

> even when most of the lands were united under one king, a substantial part of the realm consisted of relatively autonomous fiefs along the borders. The greatest were the duchies of Halland next to Norway and Sweden, and Schleswig or Southern Jutland between Denmark and Germany. Several islands in Southern Denmark were also enfeoffed to princes who, through alliances to other rulers, often in practice could claim independence from the Danish king.[70]

Indeed, it was recurrent policy of the Danish kings to buy off brothers and kinsmen with apanages even though this would often backfire as these territories in turn became staging grounds for these rivals and their allies against the kings.[71] Nevertheless, even in alliances with powerful monarchs such as the kings of Norway these contenders were never able to topple the Valdemarian kings by force.

Conclusion

Several factors contributed to the rise and fall of the Valdemarian Empire. One was political: the empire grew from the internal need to rally the nobility around the king after a lengthy war of succession. The Danish magnates possessed warriors and ships and driven by religious fervour and a desire for profit they committed these forces to the king's wars against the pagans along the Baltic Rim. It furthermore seems that Danish towns contained an elite of merchants-*cum*-pirates who were more than willing to participate in these wars, too. As long as the royal power was stable, the Danes maintained a strong presence at sea. However, with the incessant internecine wars of the second

68 Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 312.
69 Hybel and Poulsen 2007, 310.
70 Jensen 2002a, 178.
71 *Ibid*, 179–80.

half of the thirteenth century, the impetus for external expansion vanished. From the reign of Erik VI Menved the regime changed dramatically. It was much less reliant on Danish towns and magnates, turning instead to a system of extensive taxation, and the co-opting of foreign allies and mercenaries to maintain and extend the power of the Danish king. This reliance on foreign alliances and credit, together with an eroding support for the king among the magnates, eventually gave rise to rebellions and the collapse of royal power.

These political changes worked in tandem with socio-economic developments in Denmark during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Though agriculture as a source of income was clearly well-established by the twelfth century, the economic paradigm favoured by the elite still to a certain degree resembled the economy of plunder of the Viking Age. However, by the first decades of the thirteenth century several changes became apparent. The crusades in the Baltic had opened up Baltic ports as markets for Scandinavian commerce, and increasingly for German merchants as well. The increased reliance on the cog as the region's principal transport ship, as well as the regulation of the markets, caused private plundering enterprises to become rarer. Moreover, landowning and agriculture increasingly became a more stable source of income for the Danish magnates compared to the high gain/high risk of maritime plundering. While the nobility resented taxation, they generally seem to have preferred to pay taxes rather than to fight. While Danish royal maritime protection crumbled, the town elites increasingly accepted German commercial and maritime hegemony in the Baltic Rim. Finally, a cultural change may have occurred. In continental Europe, maritime concerns were generally looked down upon by the nobility. With an increasing Europeanisation of the Danish elite and royal court, and a growing royal preoccupation with Northern German affairs, maritime matters may simply have come be regarded as antiquated and rustic. By 1300 it seems clear that much more prestige could be gained by mounted, chivalrous warfare on land than by seaborne raiding. Together these three factors showed a shift in the Danish empire from a thalassocracy to a feudal medieval kingdom that was increasingly territorial in its culture and its concerns. But the importance of controlling the sea and especially the delta continued. Indeed, throughout the following centuries the grand strategy of any Danish ruler aimed at controlling traffic through the delta and the surrounding territories.

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CHAPTER 9

Seventeenth-Century Sweden and the *Dominium Maris Baltici* — a Maritime Empire?

Olaf Mörke

The *dominium maris baltici* had been officially mentioned for the first time in 1614.[1] With the alliance treaty of The Hague then concluded between the Dutch States General and the Swedish Crown, the former acknowledged the Swedish claim for supremacy over the Baltic Sea. The ambiguity of the concept *dominium*, oscillating between property and rule, exactly matches the political situation in the Baltic region at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The young Våsa monarchy, existing only since 1523, had succeeded in stabilizing its rule in 1544, when hereditary monarchy replaced the traditional electoral system. Nonetheless the Estates, particularly the high aristocracy, maintained its strong position in the Swedish political system. The king had to deal with their influence until the late seventeenth century. Only during the long reign of king Charles XI (1660–1697) did the Estates lose their influence over legislation and taxation. Since the late 1670s the king "was very clever in exploiting the conflict between the Nobility and the non-noble Estates, as well as between the aristocracy and the gentry."[2] But apart from the relatively short era of what might be called Swedish absolutism in the last decade of Charles XI's rule and under his son Charles XII until 1718, the political mechanism of a typical *monarchia mixta*, the necessity of a permanent reconciliation of interests between the crown and the estates, shaped the development of the Swedish zone of influence in the Baltic in the early modern period. My essay discusses how the territorial development of the Swedish crown and the idea of the *dominium maris baltici* fits into currently discussed concepts of non-national state forms.

The term *dominium maris baltici* suggests a maritime character of Swedish hegemony in the region. The construction of the *Våsa*, with 64 guns one of the largest and most powerfully armed war ships of its time, underlined the pretension of the young king Gustavus Adolphus to rule the Baltic sea. One should not interpret the sinking of the vessel immediately after its being

1 Schilling 2007, 341.

2 Rystad 1987, 83.

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launched in 1628 as an indicator for the early disappointment of that project. The *Våsa* with her splendidly decorated stern glorifying the regiment of Gustavus Adolphus had the task of protecting the supply lines for the Swedish troops in Prussia which fought the army of the Polish Våsa king Sigismund. Sigismund, king of Poland from 1587 until his death in 1632, and from 1592 until his dismissal by the Swedish Estates, the *Riksdag,* in 1599 also king of Sweden, had never recognized the loss of the Swedish throne. The conflict between the two branches of the Våsa family, the Roman Catholic in Poland, the Lutheran in Sweden, not only stands for an internal dynastic quarrel. It also indicates the intention of the Våsa dynasty to rule the northern and the southern shores of the Baltic Sea.

Keeping Denmark in Check

To establish a strong influence in the entire Baltic region was vital for the survival of an independent Swedish kingdom. The Swedish breaking off of the Kalmar Union – a personal union of the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden under Danish dominance – in 1523 did not terminate the strong Danish position in the Baltic completely. On the contrary, the loss of the Swedish crown probably consolidated the Danish position more than it did undermine it. During the greater part of the fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries substantial parts of the Swedish nobility had called the union into question.

The break of 1523 on the one hand plunged the Oldenburg dynasty, which ruled the kingdoms of the Kalmar Union, into an internal crisis. On the other hand it offered the chance for a new beginning of successful Danish power politics after decades of instability. King Christian II had succeeded his father Hans on the Danish and Norwegian thrones in 1513. Sweden did not recognize him until 1520, when the Swedes had been beaten by his troops and were compelled to accept his kingship. In Denmark he challenged the political and economic position of the aristocratic elite in favour of the citizenry. In 1523 Christian II not only lost the Swedish crown. Also the Danish Council of the Realm renounced its allegiance to the king. In April 1523 he left Denmark on a ship bound to the Netherlands. An attempt to return to Norway failed in 1532. Until 1549 he spent the rest of his life as a prisoner of his successors Frederik I, who died in 1533, and Christian III, who ruled Denmark from 1534 and Norway from 1537 until 1559. After a civil war, the so called *Grevens Fejde*, the Count's Feud, which lasted from 1534 until 1536 and involved among others the city of Lübeck and the Swedish Våsa king Gustavus I, he initiated what has

been called "the rebirth of the Oldenburg monarchy."[3] The introduction of the Lutheran reformation in 1536 strengthened the royal authority. A modernized state administration; fiscal, legal and military reforms promoted the potential to act as a decisive political power in Northern Europe.

Admittedly, Sweden had been lost for the Oldenburg dynasty. But around 1600 Denmark controlled the maritime connections between the Baltic and the North Sea as it had already done a century before. The Sound was lined on its western and eastern shores by Danish territory. The Danish provinces of Scania, Blekinge and Halland and the Norwegian Bohuslän prevented Sweden from unhindered access to the North Sea. Only the mouth of the Göta älv with the fortress Älvsborg belonged to Sweden and formed a narrow direct entrance to the North Sea constantly threatened by the Danish neighbours. In the Baltic the islands of Bornholm, Gotland and Ösel, the now Estonian island Saarema, were under Danish rule. For Denmark, more important than these eastern territorial outposts was that it not only controlled the Sound. With the Cimbrian Peninsula, Jutland and the Duchies of Slesvig and Holstein, it bordered directly with both the Baltic and the North Sea. Norway with Iceland and the Faroe Islands stood for the Danish influence in the North Atlantic region.

Since the sixteenth century the naval trade with Western and Southern Europe and the access to the transatlantic trade had been of growing importance for the powers bordering the Baltic Sea. In the seventeenth century "the core of the European world economy was […] firmly established in the North Sea zone, a complete regional system in itself, with its own peripheral and semi-peripheral areas in the Baltic and eastern Europe."[4] Denmark around 1600 might have been more a North Sea than a Baltic power. But its geographic position as a threshold, or better, a hinge between the Baltic and the North Sea ensured its significance for the entire Baltic region as long as it monopolized the control of the Sound.[5]

Therefore the long-term survival of a politically independent Swedish kingdom depended on its ability to keep Denmark in check by diplomatic and military means. For that purpose the building of a strong navy had been indispensable. In 1636 the Swedish chancellor Axel Oxenstierna clearly recognized the connection between a strong fleet and the chance to dominate the Baltic.[6] During the sixteenth century the Danish navy had been the strongest of the region. In 1630 the Danes had 42 war ships at their disposal, the Swedes only 31.

3 Lockhart 2007, 28.
4 Ormrod 2003, 335–336.
5 The Cimbrian Peninsula as a hinge between the Baltic and the North Sea: Mörke 2015, *passim*.
6 Wolke 2011, 171.

But in 1645 the ratio had reversed: a mere 35 Danish ships stood against 58 on the Swedish side. That indicates a shift not only in the military, but also in the political balance of power.

Acquiring New Provinces

The Swedish efforts to control the Baltic can on the one hand be understood as the successful attempt of the protestant branch of the Våsa to eliminate its catholic relatives in Poland as rival for the Swedish crown and competitor in the regional political power play. On the other hand these efforts were made to expand the political influence not only in order to acquire new territories but also to get diplomatic control of potential allies of the Danes, especially among the princes in northern and north-eastern Germany. The marriage of Gustavus Adolphus with Maria Eleonora, daughter of John Sigismund, Elector of Brandenburg, in 1620 should be considered as a typical example of diplomatic networking to prevent the Elector from thwarting the Swedish plans.

The traditional position of the Swedish crown in the eastern Baltic region may have played a part in Swedish Baltic politics too. Since the 12th century, Sweden and the Novgorod Republic – stretching from the Baltic to the northern Ural mountains – had struggled for influence in Finland. In 1323 the Treaty of Nöteborg regulated the border between the two competing powers and established Swedish rule over the south and west of today's Finland. The border however remained disputed. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Sweden shifted it eastwards at the expense of the Tsardom of Russia. In the 1580s, Estonia too became Swedish. In 1617 Sweden acquired Ingria (Ingermanland), located along the southern and eastern shores of the Gulf of Finland, after a war fought with Russia. With the acquisition of Livonia in 1629 the entire Gulf of Finland was under Swedish control. Thus the ambitious new Moscowian state had been separated from its direct access to the Baltic Sea. In the long run this couldn't be acceptable for Russia, which wanted to partake in the European economic and political development. With Russia a new opponent for the political domination in the eastern Baltic region arose that the Swedes couldn't match in the end.

It was not until 1700 that Sweden's time as a great power came to an end. For the time being the territorial expansion of Sweden went on. In 1648 the Treaty of Westphalia had awarded the western parts of the Duchy of Pomerania, occupied since the early 1630s, to Sweden, which it retained until 1806. In addition, the former bishoprics of Bremen and Verden were ruled by Sweden from 1648 to 1719. These German territories in Swedish hands remained parts of the Holy

Roman Empire. The Swedish crown may have looked upon them as 'provinces'. This, however, did not correspond to their legal status. These acquisitions, by which the Swedes controlled the estuaries of the rivers Oder, Elbe and Weser, were also at the expense of the Danish Oldenburg dynasty, which tried to keep its influence in the Northern parts of the Empire. After 1523, the power struggle between Denmark and Sweden would go on for more than a century. The Danes finally fell behind when they lost the provinces of Scania, Blekinge, and Halland, and the Norwegian Bohuslän in 1658. From now on Sweden had safe direct access to the Kattegat and thus to the North Sea.[7]

The most prominent strategic aim of the Swedish political and military efforts after 1523 was the containment of Danish power. The *dominium maris baltici* was no end in itself. It is likely that it was considered by the Swedish kings and the political elite of the Estates of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as essential to secure the existence of the monarchy. The superiority of Sweden over its enemies depended mainly on innovations in the art of warfare and on the "creation of an administrative apparatus of almost unique effectiveness, continuity and honesty."[8]

The territories under the rule of the Swedish crown were organized along the typical principles of a composite state. Even those regions bordering directly on the Swedish core territory of 1523 as for example the province of Scania kept the old political privileges of the regional elites, but were step by step – above all culturally – integrated into the Swedish core state. "East Danes became South Swedes."[9] In the new territories around the Baltic coast, Ingria, Estonia, Livonia and Pomerania, the new Swedish masters had to take the traditional political structures, especially the role of the regional Estates, into account. The relationship with the Estates in all those regions had to be constantly discussed. A strict standardization following the patterns of the now 'mother land' was impossible. "The Swedish government was indeed more interested in the defence and security of the trans-Baltic lands than in pursuing uniformity. […] Attempts were made at various times to weaken the powers of the nobility over their peasants, and Swedish law was introduced in certain instances […]; but on the whole, the Swedish government preferred to leave the provinces to look after their own affairs."[10]

7 How important this access was is demonstrated by another territorial acquisition. The central Norwegian Trondheim region, the direct gate to the North Atlantic Ocean, was in Swedish possession only from 1658 to 1660. Again at the expense of the Denmark-Norway!

8 Rystad 1987, 63.

9 Villstrand 2011, 296–306 (quotation: p. 306).

10 Kirby 1990, 223.

That résumé matches the general route of the Swedish politics. A total uniformity of administration and legislation not only would have overtaxed the resources of the Swedish state with its small population and a relatively underdeveloped economy. It also would have weakened the cohesion of the expanding territory. It depended on the one hand on the acceptance of Swedish rule by those living in the newly acquired territories and on the other on the ability to secure them against the increasing formation of military alliances fighting the Swedish superiority in the Baltic. That had been the case since the breathtakingly fast sequence of conquests in the east Baltic and the west came to a stop after 1658. From now on only the consolidation of the status quo could be the task of Swedish politics. That only succeeded until Sweden was defeated in the Great Northern War (1700–1721) by a coalition of the neighbouring Baltic states led by Russia. Sweden lost Estonia, Livonia, Ingria and Southeast Finland to Russia. Brandenburg-Prussia took possession of parts of Swedish Pomerania, among them the port city of Stettin and the Oder estuary. Bremen and Verden had to be ceded to Hanover. It's remarkable that Sweden could keep the former Danish-Norwegian provinces Scania, Blekinge, Halland and Bohuslän and with that the direct access to the North Sea. The decisive European powers – with Great Britain and Russia at the top – didn't have any interest in seeing the Sound under sole control of the Danes. Northern Europe and the Baltic became part of the international balance of power system. Sweden had finally lost its position as a great power, which in fact could only be kept for the decades between the 1630s, when Gustavus Adolphus successfully intervened in the Thirty Years' War, and the end of the seventeenth century, when it became definitely clear that Sweden might have overstretched its expansion with its engagement in the Thirty Years' War.[11]

An Imperial Logic?

One might ask, whether it is justified to characterize the seventeenth century territorial conglomerate under Swedish rule as an imperial system. The relatively short life of what can be called the Swedish *dominium maris baltici*, the political and military domination of the Baltic region, might speak against it. But that starts from the assumption that only long-term success would allow the qualification of the Swedish rule as an Empire. However, it should have

11 Villstrand 2011, 148; Wolke 2011, 175–177.

become clear that the development of that rule since the late sixteenth century followed an imperial logic. In order to stabilize the independent monarchy and the position of the Lutheran Våsa dynasty, Sweden had to fight the Danish power as well as the Catholic Polish rulers of Poland-Lithuania and the expanding Russian state. The development of Sweden as a military state had been consistent. And that military state didn't restrict itself to the defence of its core territory. The competition with Denmark, Poland and Russia swiftly lead Sweden into an offensive political and military strategy beyond the own borders. Among others it resulted from the geographical situation. Because the competitors bordered the Baltic Sea in the west, east and south successful warfare depended essentially on the control of the maritime routes and on the control of territories, which would have enabled the opponents of Sweden to fight its military dominance and possibly even to bother the core territory of Sweden-Finland. Military aggressiveness and territorial expansion were closely associated with an originally defensive purpose: the protection of a newcomer state in northern Europe.

The outcome was a composite state, consisting of different territories with different political and legal status, united by a single monarch. That was by no means unique in early modern Europe. But in the Swedish case it had not been the result of a long-term process since the late Middle Ages. It came out of a then very current political and military challenge. Nonetheless the coherence of this composite state with its different elites and its cultural and linguistic diversity had to be managed practically, socially and concerning the idea how and why this coherence should be justified.

The centralized nation state does not belong to the way European countries used to be organized in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[12] However, there were fundamentally different degrees of political and administrative coherence. One the one hand even late seventeenth century France, the prototype of an early modern central state, didn't lack the elements of a decentralized *monarchia mixta*. On the other hand the Dutch Republic, probably the most decentralized European state at that time, had its centralizing institutions.[13]

The concept of 'nation' developed its importance as an instrument to construct collective identity in connection with the state building process mainly from the late eighteenth century onwards. But since the fifteenth century proto-national narratives closely connected with the idea of nationhood

12 Koenigsberger 1986; 1990.

13 Prak 2002, 183–203; Israel 1995, 276–306.

started to play an important role to explain the coherence of the population of states as a collective sharing common values and a common history.[14]

To understand how the Swedish territorial conglomerate functioned, we have to examine its administration and the patterns of political participation as well as the development of the political elites at first. In a second step we will have a look at the ways a Swedish collective identity had been constructed since the fifteenth century.

In 1634, after Sweden had reached a first peak of its power in the Baltic after Livonia had been acquired in 1629 and Pomerania had been conquered in 1630, the *Instrument of Government* had been issued. This edict reorganized the central government "in a way that made the Swedish administration an admired model for other European countries."[15] It also re-shaped the organization of the army. The crucial role of the nobility had been fixed by the regulation "that the five colleges of central government – the supreme court, the chancery, the treasury, the war council and the admiralty – should be staffed primarily by native-born members of the nobility, from whose number the ruler was also to choose the council of the realm."[16]

The nobility's dominance in the highest ranks of government didn't go unquestioned in the future. The Instrument had been modified in 1660. But the moderate expansion of the power of the Riksdag, the Swedish Estates, didn't change the strong influence of the nobility in principle. Even during the time of the so called Swedish absolutism between 1680 and 1719 the Estates didn't loose their influence completely. However, the non-noble estates, the cities and the peasantry, were now the main supporters of the king at the expense of the nobility.

The late seventeenth century, when the Swedish dominance in the Baltic region had been more and more vigorously challenged by others, had also been a period of intensified social and political dynamics. Conflicts within between noble and non-noble elites obviously couldn't be reconciled any longer.

That had been significantly different during the era of expansion. The conquest of new territories created new chances for positions in military and administration and the redistribution of estates both in Finland-Sweden and in the new territories. As long as those social groups, which significantly influenced the political and societal consensus in Sweden, benefitted from an expansive policy a political bargain between the societal interest groups was possible. The end of the absolutist period and the beginning of the so called

14 Hirschi 2005, *passim*; Mörke 1996.
15 Rystad 1987, 63 and 71.
16 Kirby 1990, 206–207.

frihetstid, the Age of Liberty, when in 1719 the Estates gained a by then unprecedented power, marked a fundamental change. At the moment it became clear that the era of expansion was definitively over, a new balance of power had to be found. Especially the relationship between king and Estates had to be redefined. This relationship had played a decisive ideological role for the formation of Sweden as a great power in Northern Europe.

Strengthening Cultural Ties

Typical for the sixteenth and seventeenth century were historic-mythical narratives which explained both the origin and the outstanding position of a 'people' or a 'nation' in comparison with others.[17] The Helvetians for the Swiss Confederation, the Batavians for the Dutch, the Sarmatians for Poland and the Goths for Sweden as well as for the Danes provided them with stories taken for granted as historic facts which justified present and future political reality and the current societal order. Some of these narratives – as for example the stories of the Helvetians and the Sarmatians – were orientated towards a more defensive perspective in order to secure oneself against a hostile surrounding. Others had a more aggressive keynote and propagated attack and conquest as the best way to secure one's own position, combining a missionary idea with the idea of one's own superiority. Gothicism might be the most prominent example of that type in early modern Europe. The predestination of the Swedes as the real Goths to rule others in order both to protect and to spread a specifically Swedish idea of liberty was connected with the idea of a charismatic leader who cares for his people and for its values formed the nucleus of Swedish Gothicism. Its career as an argument to underline the outstanding position of Sweden in the concert of European powers already started in the fifteenth century but became relevant during the successful attempt to secure Sweden against the Danish rival. Johannes Magnus, the last Catholic Archbishop of Uppsala, took up the subject in his *Historia de omnibus regibus gothorum sveonumque* (The history of all Goths and Svear kings), which had been published in 1554. Against the Danish-dominated Union of Kalmar, he drew a picture of the Swedes who were born free by the legacy of the Svea-Gothic forefathers and the generosity of nature, while the Danes were condemned to slavery. The Swedish people stood unanimously behind a king, elected from among his own and in agreement with the nobility, who thus became the embodiment of

17 Berding 1996; Bömelburg 2006, 66–94, 158–175, 409–418, and *passim*. Schöffer 1975.

freedom. Of central importance for Johannes Magnus is the history of the exile of the Goths from Scandinavia and their conquests in ancient times. Their unity had made them invincible and predestined for the subjugation of other nations, including Rome.

The combination of superiority with a missionary attitude became the ideological foundation of Swedish power politics since King Gustavus Adolphus. As early as the 1620s, Protestant clergy invited the expansionary impulse with salvation history. The Swedish intervention in the Thirty Years' War was one of the practical consequences. On the occasion of his coronation in 1617, the young king Gustavus Adolphus performed as king Berik. According to Johannes Magnus, the Goth king Berik had been the first to unite the Swedish people. He had taken it on conquests to the south coast of the Baltic Sea, and finally to Spain and the Levant. The intention which Gustavus Adolphus pursued, when he appeared as Berik, is made clear in a publication written by himself or at least at his instigation. It states that "Sweden is superior to any foreign power, if its inhabitants are loyal and subordinate to their king."[18] The king as a leader moves into the centre of public attention. Johannes Bureus, the educator of the young king, had already familiarized him with the categories of Gothicism. He designed the historical justification for the conquest of those areas which he regarded as the natural space of Sweden.[19] As Johannes Magnus, Bureus combined the two elements of Swedish Gothicism: the justification of expansion through cultural superiority and the concentration on the charismatic king as the executor of a historically justified political commission.

Especially in the competition with Denmark Gothicism developed its own effect. For in Denmark, too, the Goths had been set up in the conflict with Sweden. In 1626, the antiquarian Ole Worm published the *Fasti danici*, which is regarded as "an example of the cultural conflict with Sweden."[20] Worm, for his part, tried to prove the superiority of the Danes as the true Goths over the Swedes. The further development, above all the defeat of the Danish king Christian IV in the Thirty Years' War, which culminated in a peace treaty in 1629, anything but glorious for Christian, seemed to prove the superiority of the Swedes as the true Goths.

Swedish Gothicism had demonstrated its suitability as a justification for an imperial system of rule – especially against the Danish ambitions. But the Swedish crown had more instruments at its disposal to strengthen the ideological coherence of its territories. The religious argument, the emphasis on

18 Mörke 1996, 118–119.

19 Roberts 1992, 519–520; Barudio 1982, 73–77.

20 Schmidt-Voges 2004, 364–386 (quotation: p. 376).

one's own belief against heretics, reinforced the consciousness of one's own superiority and the inferiority of others. This did not only come to the fore in the propaganda of the German Protestants during the Thirty Years' War, which elevated Gustavus Adolphus as the 'lion from midnight' to a personification of salvation and redemption.[21] Earlier, the religious argument was used in the demarcation from orthodox Russia.

Map drawing might be considered as an early and effective way to sketch the narrative of the connection between history and space.[22] An early example of such a narrative is the *Carta Marina*, published in 1539, by the Catholic clergyman Olaus Magnus, the brother of Johannes Magnus, author of the *Historia de omnibus regibus gothorum sveonumque.* Olaus wrote the *Historia de gentibvs septemtrionalibvs*, "a story of the northern peoples," and, as a preparatory work for the *Historia*, he designed the *Carta Marina et Descriptio Septentrionalium Terrarum*, "a map of the sea and a description of the northern lands."[23]

In which spatial context did Olaus position Sweden?[24] He depicted the Baltic Sea and the North Sea with their neighbours as well as parts of the North Atlantic. That is what he considered to be the *Septemtrionales Terrae*, the northern landscapes. Flora and fauna of land and sea, climate, economy, religion, political conditions, nearly all areas of culture and nature are presented to the viewer, sometimes surprisingly realistic, sometimes fancifully imaginative. A world is presented whose limitations clearly mark the map. In the north it reaches as far as Iceland, to the southern tip of Greenland and to the North Cape, to the south to the continental coastal regions of the Baltic and the North Sea. In the west we find England, Scotland, the island chain from the Orkneys over to the Shetlands, the Faroe Islands and the legendary island of Thule up again to Iceland. In the east it extends to the White Sea and includes the northwest edge of the Muscovite empire. The central north-south axis of the *Carta Marina* is formed by a very bulky Scandia, the land mass of today's Sweden and Norway, as well as the Cimbrian peninsula.

Scandia's massiveness appears to be a barrier rather than a passage between Baltic and North Sea. On the other hand, the region of the Danish islands, the Sound, Kattegat and Skagerrak and the Cimbrian peninsula indicate permeability. A vessel marked as *Hollandi* (Dutchman) on the western edge of the

21 Schmidt-Voges 2004, 279–284.

22 Schlögel 2003, 51.

23 For reproductions of the *Carta marina* see: James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota. URL: www.lib.umn.edu/apps/bell/map/OLAUS/indexo.html. Accessed March 25, 2017.

24 Mörke 2015, 14–20.

Skagerrak, and another of unknown nationality in the Kattegat north of the island of Zealand point to the passage character between the Baltic and the North Sea. It is also an early evidence that the importance of the Dutch for maritime trade in that region had been realized by the learned theologian.

The Carta Marina is much more than the mere description of a geophysical phenomenon, which is oriented only on the objectivity of the compass needle. The new research has shown that the map of Olaus Magnus is highly idealized. Olaus had presented "a work that had the potential to fill the great white spot that the region represented in the perception and imagination of its contemporaries outside Northern Europe."[25] He showed the totality of the northern countries as a part of Christian ecumenism, on the other hand, as a cultural space capable of independent achievement.

In 1558, Russia ventured to Livonia. The Livonian or First Nordic War, which lasted until 1582, rang in a series of military conflicts for supremacy in the Baltic between Sweden, Denmark, Poland and Russia which continued into the eighteenth century. The war ended with a defeat of Russia and above all consolidated the position of Sweden in Estonia. Both on the Russian and the Swedish side the ideological legitimacy of the Livonian War, the struggle against the "European antichristians," should it be Catholics or Protestants for the Russians, the Russian Orthodox Church for the Swedes, was emphasized. It demonstrated the opposition of two cultural spaces, each of which considered itself as the "Christian world."[26] The Carta Marina had already made clear signs of this. For Olaus, the Russians clearly belonged to the peoples of the North. They are, however, responsible for several severe threats. On the one hand the military-political one. On the *Carta Marina*, Russian aggressiveness and the preparedness of the threatened, especially the Swedes, are portrayed on several occasions around the Finnish Gulf. The Muscovite ruler appears in an aggressive gesture. A biblical quotation right under the miniature, which depicts him on his throne, recalls with whom one has to deal: With a schismatic. It is St Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians: "Let no divisions be among you" (1 Cor 1:10). The call for unity is to be understood as an invitation to victory over the schismatics![27]

The understanding of unity, expressed by Olaus Magnus in the Carta Marina, also shaped the political practice during the Swedish expansion phase. Rigorous uniformity of belief served on the one hand the normative coherence of the composite state. On the other hand, it underlined the necessity of

25 Sach 2009, 209.
26 Filjuškin 2012, 83.
27 Mörke 2015, 107–108.

the struggle against real or supposed confessional deviation from outside. The formula "*religio vinculum societatis*" – religion is the link of society – gets the "need for integration of state and church" intensified in the sixteenth and seventeenth century to its heart.[28] In 1637, the Swedish Chancellor Oxenstierna justified the intervention of his country in the Thirty Years' War with the need to assure the existence of the "regnum Sueciae," the kingdom of Sweden, and of their fellow believers. He also emphasizes that religion belongs to the *status publicus*, the general political order.[29] Here the effect of this need for integration on the Swedish foreign policy becomes clear!

In the 1530s the new king Gustav Vasa had started to separate Sweden from Rome. He initiated a process of church reform, including Finland, which was to last until the end of the century. Since the 1590s the confessionalization process in Sweden-Finland bore the hallmark of Lutheran orthodoxy.[30]

The crown thus had political instruments at its disposal, which changed the structure of the noble elites and of the clergy in favour of a closer linkage of the territories under its rule. Infrastructure measures in education supported the Swedish political-military expansion. Soon after 1630 the only Swedish university of Uppsala, since 1595 strictly orientated to orthodox Lutheranism, was no longer sufficient to supply the modernized administration of the expanding power with qualified experts. In 1632 the university of Dorpat in Livonia was founded by king Gustavus Adolphus. Shortly thereafter followed the establishment of a royal academy in the Finnish Åbo (Turku) in 1640, and finally the founding of the University of Lund in 1658 in Scania, the new province at the Sound just acquired from Denmark in the treaty of Roskilde. The Greifswald University, already founded in 1456, but reduced to regional importance at most already in the sixteenth century, was revived by the new Swedish masters of Pomerania after the devastation of the Thirty Years' War, which had almost brought the academic life to a standstill.[31] The network of universities covered the new territories under Swedish rule. These foundations must be considered as measures to strengthen the regional infrastructure. But they also strengthened the cultural and normative ties between those new territories and the Swedish heartland. The establishment of a dogmatically unified Lutheranism and the expansion of the school and university system were essential conditions for the integration of the new territories in the Swedish cultural cosmos.

28 Schilling 1988, 33.

29 Piirimäe 2002, 523–524.

30 Buchholz 2003, 163–217.

31 Alvermann 2007, 69–104; Asche 2007, 47–60; Von zur Mühlen 1994, 207–215; Giese 2009, 248–254.

The clergy of the new provinces was also legally assimilated "to the Swedish clergy in the framework of a territorial church system comprising the core kingdom as well as the new provinces."[32]

One might conclude that there are indicators that seventeenth century Sweden indeed gained political and military and in some respects cultural dominance, one might even say it established a hegemonial system in the Baltic region. But that was only partly possible by its own efforts. At the beginning the independence of the Våsa monarchy benefitted from the interior conflicts of the Danish and the weakness of other powers in the eastern Baltic. During the period of territorial expansion, starting with the integration of Estonia in 1561 and continuing with Ingria, Karelia, Livonia in the early seventeenth century, Sweden fought against enemies which were inferior in terms of domestic stability and military strength. The breakdown of the state of the Teutonic Order had led to the political and confessional fragmentation of the region since the first half of the sixteenth century. Poland and Russia as the most important neighbouring powers competed with each other to fill the vacuum of power. They also stood against each other in other places along their border. At that time for different reasons neither of them had the ability to deal a determining military blow, which would have taken the other out of the game. So Sweden became the laughing third. How did it manage to integrate those regions into the own territorial complex in a way, which didn't threaten the stability of the composite monarchy?

Participation and Rule

The relationship between the Swedish heartland and the trans-Baltic territories had been hierarchical concerning the rights of political participation. According to the 1634 *Instrument of Government* only the Estates of Sweden and Finland were represented at the Riksdag. Even between those two quasi-original parts of the composite state the difference was obvious. "Finland was consistently underrepresented at the meetings of the Estates." The new trans-Baltic provinces remained excluded from the Riksdag. That didn't inevitably mean a disparagement. King Charles IX had supported a full integration of new territories into the realm "with equality for their inhabitants in terms of laws and privileges, as well as in such matters as representation at the Riksdag, membership of the Council, and registration in the House of the Nobility." But

32 Tuchtenhagen 2005, 43.

this concept had been opposed by the majority of the Swedish aristocracy as well as by the Baltic nobility. The latter enjoyed privileges in many respects superior to those of Swedish nobility. Equality in terms of privileges would have meant a loss of influence in their home regions, both politically and socially. Swedish aristocrats who had acquired extensive Baltic estates in the new provinces also benefitted from those privileges. "To those who owned estates in the Baltic provinces, native Balts and Swedes alike, the principle of incorporation and its concomitant principle of uniformity in terms of noble privileges was manifestly unattractive."[33]

A different way had been chosen for those territories gained in 1645 by the Treaty of Brömsebro – the island of Gotland, Jämtland and Härjedalen in central Sweden at the Norwegian border, and Halland at the Kattegat, received from Denmark for a period of 30 years – and in 1658 by the Treaty of Roskilde: Scania, Blekinge, Bohuslän and Halland, which had been now definitely transferred to Sweden. The concept of incorporation and uniformity, which had been already favoured by Charles IX, now had been combined with the preservation of regional privileges. One the one hand the estates of the newly conquered provinces were fully represented in the Riksdag. On the other hand the estates of those provinces were "allowed to retain their old laws and privileges insofar as they were compatible with Swedish constitutional law." This was of only limited success. During the Scanian War with Denmark between 1675 and 1679, which can be considered as the first – unsuccessful – attempt to revise the results of the Swedish conquests along the Sound, the Swedish rule in Scania had been seriously challenged by guerrilla activities. The Swedes reacted with the full integration of the Sound and Kattegat provinces by introducing uniformity concerning the privileges of the estates as well as concerning the legal and confessional status.[34]

In Pomerania the territorial Estates kept their rights and their influence on the provincial politics until the end of the *ancien régime* in 1806. Sweden had to find an arrangement with the Pomeranian Estates not least because of the challenges of foreign policy.

In the Swedish-Brandenburg War, which coincided with the Scanian War, it became clear that a new opponent had emerged, whose efforts to expand his access to the Baltic Sea collided with Sweden's interest. The Swedish-Brandenburg War between 1674 and 1679 ended in a debacle for the up to now victorious great power. Swedish-Pomerania was in Brandenburg's hands. Only the diplomatic

33 All quotations: Rystad 1987, 85–86.

34 Rystad 1987, 86; Vilstrand 2011, 186–190.

calculations of the other European powers, particularly the Netherlands, the Emperor and France, allowed the Swedes in the Peace Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye of 1679 to keep most of its Pomeranian territory. Elector Frederick William of Brandenburg could only add a small tip of the Oder estuary to his Pomeranian possessions, which he had already received in 1648 in the course of the Peace of Westphalia. With the Peace of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, the European powers clearly demonstrated the limitations of Swedish power politics.

The Swedish government of Pomerania was led by a governor general who had to be a member of the Swedish *Riksråd*, the aristocratic Council of the Realm. The other positions of the provincial government were open for members of the indigenous elites. Also the Wismar tribunal, the High Court of Justice for the German territories under Swedish rule, installed in 1654 in the Hansa city of Wismar, now under Swedish rule, verifies the social amalgamation and practical cooperation of Swedish and German members.[35]

So the coherence of the Swedish territorial conglomerate had been only partly constructed by administrational and legal unification. Yet one has to bring into question whether the differences concerning laws and privileges between the Swedish-Finnish core land and the territories acquired since the second half of the sixteenth century only mirror a mere hierarchic system. It seems to be more appropriate to interpret these differences as a highly functional political instrument to integrate especially those trans-Baltic regions into the Våsa monarchy which all had a political culture of their own, similar but not identical with the Swedish *monarchia mixta*.

These differences allowed those regions on the one hand to maintain their own partial identity within the framework of the composite state. On the other hand, the Swedish state had sufficient instruments to develop structures of rule and domination in order to build up a, in political respects, hegemonic system around the Baltic Sea and to maintain it for several generations. One may well speak of an empire, would there not be one fundamental problem. The replacement of Denmark as the dominant power factor and, above all, the maintenance of this hegemonic system would not have been possible if there had been no others involved, which were interested in supporting the Swedish development. Since the late sixteenth century this was first of all the Dutch Republic as the leading European economic power. „The predominance of the Netherlands in the Baltic, which already became apparent in the sixteenth century, grew further in the seventeenth century."[36]

35 Buchholz 1999, 243–254; Modéer 1975.

36 North 2011, 149–153.

A Second-Rate Dominance

The Swedish-Dutch relations in the seventeenth century show a clear hierarchy. It leaves the political dominance of Sweden in the Baltic Sea region as a second-order dominance, depending on the will and power of the Dutch Republic and its economic elites. Some examples may illustrate it.

In 1619, the founding of the Swedish city of Gothenburg at the Kattegat was completed. It offered Sweden a direct access to the North Sea. Dutch know-how and capital had played an important role during the planning process. It is obvious that, besides the Swedish crown, the north-western European maritime trade powers were also interested in the project. In 1613, Sweden had to conclude the unfavourable peace of Knäred with Denmark, according to which a million *riksdalers* had to be paid to the Danes to keep that narrow access to the west coast at the mouth of the *Göta älv*, where Gothenburg was planned. Dutch creditors had raised the sum. The planning of the city was also in the hands of Dutch experts. The fact that the Dutch, the British and Germans played an important role as settlers for the city was also reflected in the fact that their decisive participation in the city council was statutory.[37]

After the peace of Knäred, Dutch capital not only ensured the survival of the Swedes at the Kattegat. In the seventeenth century it penetrated deeply into the economic, political and cultural life of the new northern European power. The spectacular career of Louis de Geer marks the tip of a Dutch-Swedish symbiosis.[38]

Dutchman De Geer, born in 1587, had become rich with arms and iron. The weapon requirements of the European powers and, of course, Sweden's new power politics in the Baltic as well as the Swedish metalworking industry, including the deposits of iron and copper in the Central Swedish mining area, offered De Geer the ideal prerequisite for the expansion of a company which combined the exploitation of iron and copper, the production and marketing of weapons as well as banking and lending business. When, in 1618, King Gustavus Adolphus arranged a Dutch loan, De Geer's part of the credit was secured by Swedish copper supplies. The business relations between him and the crown continued to develop rapidly. In the Swedish countryside he acquired, built and modernized production sites. In 1627 he finally moved to Sweden without giving up his position in Amsterdam. Within two decades he

37 Mörke 2015, 124.

38 Still significant concerning Louis de Geer: Dahlgreen 1923.

had created a triangular system of weapon production in Sweden, marketing in Amsterdam, and the use of weapons in the German war theatre. That he also profitably equipped the Swedish army had been taken for granted.[39] In 1641 De Geer was raised by Queen Christina as a *Friherre* to the Swedish aristocracy. This gave him the right reserved to the nobility to buy the crown estates, on which his production sites were based. In 1644, in agreement with the Netherlands, he prepared a fleet at his own expense, which protected Gothenburg, threatened at that time by the Danes.

His tremendous wealth and his emphasized social position demanded a corresponding display. In Norrköping, where he first settled, a representative manor house was built between 1627 and 1630. Another one in the 1640s on the fashionable Stockholm island of Södermalm.[40] Their architectural concept was based on contemporary examples from the Dutch republic.[41] De Geers' building activity simply is one spectacular illustration of how at that time members of the Swedish elites followed the example of Dutch architectural style. Other Dutch entrepreneurs and leading members of the indigenous Swedish elite were also active as clients for representative Dutch style buildings.[42] The transfer of culture from the Netherlands was not limited to the import of architectural concepts. From there the Swedish aristocracy obtained books, art objects of all kinds and luxury items. In the second half of the seventeenth century, Stockholm's theatre culture received significant impulses from the Dutch as well.[43]

The fact that about 800 Swedes studied in the Netherlands between 1620 and 1690 was due to the increased demand of the growing state apparatus for internationally experienced administrative experts and diplomats, and besides that to the reputation of the University of Leiden. The Dutch city was among the three most popular foreign study places for young Swedes. The two others were Wittenberg and Greifswald, from 1648 on officially Swedish. Wittenberg and Greifswald mainly attracted future Lutheran theologians. Young Swedish noblemen, who after their studies could hope for leading positions in secular public life and politics preferred the fashionable and international Leiden. Almost half of the professors who taught at the University of Uppsala between 1640 and 1660 had studied in Leiden.[44]

39 Lindblad 1995.
40 Noldus 2004, 59–64.
41 Noldus 2004, 43.
42 Noldus 2004, 84–94.
43 Bordewijk 1996, 436–449.
44 Noldus 2004, 129–132; Wansink 1981, 10.

Although he had become politically discredited in his home country the Dutch jurist, state philosopher, historian and writer Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) was highly esteemed in Sweden. After years of exile in France, chancellor Axel Oxenstierna made him the Swedish ambassador to Paris in 1634. A political key role, because Catholic France and Lutheran Sweden were alliance partners in the Thirty Years' War. In addition, Sweden's military engagement heavily depended on French and Dutch subsidies.[45]

The isolation from other coalition partners who would have been able to support the Swedish power politics and to finance the Swedish military state played a decisive role in the end of Sweden's imperial capabilities. This was shown in the Great Northern War. Apart from its own strength, Sweden was not in a position to secure the territorial holdings. Swedish initial successes also depended on British fleet support. The Russian occupation of Finland from 1714 to 1721, however, indicated very clearly that the Swedish overstretched expansion was not to be held militarily. The Russian-Polish-Danish alliance after 1709 underlines this statement. Above all, the British policy of multiple alliance changes in the service of an external policy of the balance of power demonstrates that the political constellations in the Baltic Sea region since the early eighteenth century can no longer be explained without the inclusion of Great Britain.[46]

Concluding Remarks: the Borrowed Empire

The role of the Dutch over most of the seventeenth and the British in the eighteenth century points to the fact that not only economically, but also politically, the North Sea and the Baltic together have to be considered as a region of mutual interdependence but with a clear predominance of the Dutch and the British. It is to be discussed whether political-military hegemonies in the Baltic Sea, whether Swedish or Russian, were, as it were, second-rate hegemonies.

The *dominium maris baltici* of Sweden in the seventeenth century showed essential elements of imperial rule in the area of political organization and cultural patterns. "Swedes controlled a large area around the Baltic, where they intervened in the decisions of all major institutions, changing laws, administration and education."[47] But the attempts to build up coherent early modern statehood were concentrated on Sweden in its present form and on Finland.

45 Kampmann 2008, 123–127; Mörke 2008.
46 Palmer 2006, 96–145.
47 Törnquist–Plewa 2015, 110.

The other territories on the southern and eastern shores of the Baltic retained a relatively high degree of autonomy as long as the Swedish rule was accepted in principle.

The newly founded institutions of higher education in Dorpat, Åbo and elsewhere emphasized the intention to strengthen the cultural ties to the Swedish crown. At the same time, the propagation of Gothicism underlines a cultural hierarchy. The Gothic narrative is focussed on Swedish superiority, combined, so to speak, with the duty to rule over others.

The intention to compete with the Dutch and the British by taking part in the transatlantic expansion can be interpreted as a sign of Swedish imperial ambitions. But the attempts to build up colonies and colonial trade companies failed in the seventeenth century. Only in 1731 a Swedish East India Company with its seat in Gothenburg was founded. It operated until 1809 on a modest level.[48] It is typical that, essentially, Scottish investors made the foundation possible.[49]

It is reasonable to conclude that the Swedish dominance in the Baltic region has to be considered as a borrowed empire. Borrowed not only with regard to financial dependence of the Swedish war activities from other powers but also with regard to the political intentions of those economic powers which dominated the Baltic trade with western and southern Europe.

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48 Nagel 2007, 138–140; Koninckx 1993, 199.

49 Murdoch 2006, 243–244.

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PART 3

The Oceans

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CHAPTER 10

Early Modern European Mercantilism and Indian Ocean Trade

Anjana Singh

History writing in the past decades has witnessed a "global turn", *i.e.*, a wave of World and Global History where-in many voices and "non-Western" perspectives emerged. After Andre Gunder Frank's call for Re-orient, many national histories also got written from post-colonial perspectives.[1] Yet, Euro-centric historiography where-in Europe's history, specially of colonial empires, is treated in national and global histories, with pride and nostalgia rather than self-criticism remains in circulation.[2] The current positive reconsideration of colonialism and colonial empires in national histories is therefore perhaps a reaction to decades of criticism against euro-centrism, especially since the 1990s. In 2002, to commemorate the establishment of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), a coffee-table book with illustrations was published. The goal of the book, as stated by the editors, was "to paint in broad strokes a beautiful image of the wheeling and dealing of the Company and the activities of its servants".[3] Similarly, in a recent popularizing history of the world, the Dutch 'Golden Age' which runs parallel to the Dutch Atlantic slave trade, is described as the "result of a finely executed plan".[4] Histories of early modern European mercantilism in the Indian Ocean region, be it of the Portuguese, Dutch, English, Danish or other Europeans, are often written in terms of conquest and empire: Europe's dominance over the Americas, Africa and over South and South East Asia starting from the various East India Companies and culminating in complete colonization.

Eurocentric historians tend to interpret the history of Europeans in South Asia as a teleology, which runs smoothly—from the arrival of the first Portuguese ship in 1498 at the port city of Calicut, on the Malabar Coast of the Indian sub-continent, to British imperialism marked in the British Parliament

1 Frank 1998.
2 Fergusson 2003 and 2011.
3 Akveld and Jacobs 2002.
4 Frankopan 2015, 258.

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by the 1858 proclamation of Queen Victoria, bringing South Asia under the British monarchy. Following the 1857 uprisings against the English East India Company, the Company's rule came to an end on the 1st of November 1858. Thereafter India was governed by and in the name of the British Monarch through a Secretary of State. In 1876, Conservative British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, in order to control India more closely, decided that Queen Victoria must be proclaimed "Empress of India" i.e, the title of Empress was added to the British crown. In India, the following year, Viceroy Lytton led the celebrations in what is known as the Delhi Durbar. This event marked the birth of the British Empire, with the head of the state holding the title of Empress.

This article aims to analyse the role and histories of various European entities that were active in the Indian Ocean world, especially in present-day India, in early modern times with the aim of characterizing the various powers and outlining the different modes of operations they adopted over three centuries. It aims to engage with the concept of "maritime empires" or "naval empires" used to describe early modern trading networks. It argues against a linear history from nation-based trading companies to "colonial empires". For this exercise, colonial empire, often written with initial capital letters, is taken to be a region and its peoples in pre-modern times, ruled over by an emperor or empress. It is often, but not always, a territory of greater extent than a kingdom or sultanate i.e., ruled by king or sultan. For example, in masculine form, the Mughal and Ming Emperors in opposition to the Kings of England and France. Within this definition of empire, emerged in the modern times the former British Empire and French Empire, both colonial in nature. Other examples include the Mughal Empire, Ming Empire, Holy Roman Empire, Russian Empire, Byzantine Empire, or Roman Empire. The constant factor being that it is a polity, localised or globalised, under an emperor or empress. Another defining or differentiating feature is that 'the nation-state tends to homogenize those inside its borders' i.e., proclaims the commonality of its people artificially. While the concept of empire presumes that different people within the polity will be governed differently. The difference is made explicit under its rule.[5] Keeping this political lens as a tool for analysing the Dutch overseas presence, we ask if one can argue for a Dutch colonial empire? This term is often used in Dutch historiography even in histories from post-colonial perspectives.

5 Burbank and Cooper 2010, 8.

South Asian Ports and the Indian Ocean World *circa* 1500

Since antiquity, port-to-port coastal sailing in the east and west coasts of South Asia was practiced, mainly for trading purposes. Overland, Africans and Europeans came to South Asia and travelled beyond. The travels of Marco Polo (born c. 1254; died January 8, 1324, Venice), between 1271 and 1295 and Moroccan Ibn Battuta (born c. 1304, Tangier; died 1368/69 or 77, Morocco) are two such examples.[6] The flow of people, ideas and commodities connected different political economies. Social, religious and economic bonds of interdependency and connectedness were characteristic features of the region.

Knowledge of monsoon winds enabled people to sail in the Indian Ocean region. This had been going on for at least two thousand years. On the west coast of South Asia, Gujarat, Konkan, Malabar, and on the east coast Coromandel and Bengal were the five main regions of the Indian sub-continent that had early modern port cities linking them to political economies across the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. Gujarat, Konkan and Malabar were linked via sea-routes to the Arab world and east Africa. Coromandel and Bengal, were connected to the Malay Peninsula and South East Asia. Different regions of the Arab, African, Malayan and South-East Asian world were thus connected to the Indian sub-continent through sailing routes. In this way, South Asian ports linked Africa and Arabia to south-east Asia and China. Arab and Gujarati merchants regularly sailed up to the ports of Malabar and Bengal and these were connected to south-east Asia.[7]

In Indian economic and business history, the Arabian Sea in medieval and early modern times has special significance. For centuries, the port-cities and other settlements on the Arabian Sea littoral—Arabia, Africa and South Asia—traded with each other. Indian textiles were exported and horses, armaments, pearls and ivory imported into South Asia. Indian cotton textiles were used on the east coast of Africa and even functioned as a medium of exchange. Indian textiles were also sent overland to Europe via Arabs and Italian merchants for sale in European markets. A complex, trustworthy and sophisticated system of ship-building, head-hiring, shipping and banking had developed and this infrastructure ensured cross-cultural trade for centuries. Both Hindu and Muslim merchants, for example from Gujarat, participated in this maritime trade.[8]

Early modern South Asian and Chinese empires derived their revenues predominantly from agricultural taxation. Taxes and levies on maritime trade

6 Akbari and Iannucci 2008.

7 Pearson 2015.

8 Tripathi 2004.

were marginal to the treasury. Ports were peripheral places far from the political and economic centres of the interiors. Although revenues from maritime trade were a small proportion of their total revenue, these were nonetheless valuable and permanent sources of income. Both in South Asia and China, several political elites were also prominent maritime merchants. Maritime trade of the Indian Ocean included voyages that took African, Arab South Asian and Chinese merchants away from their home ports for as long as two or more years under perilous conditions. Merchants sailed to various regions based on established networks that ran through generations and had been in place for centuries. There were no armed polities that underwrote their contracts, protected their investments, or guaranteed their safety.[9] Sophisticated nautical technologies were developed wherein large, sea-worthy vessels crossed the Indian Ocean with large amounts of goods and numerous passengers. They were propelled by the dependable monsoon winds and metal free ships. An extensive network of international trade existed and was successful. These were centuries old commercial networks based upon a complex social organization.[10]

The connectedness, sailing techniques and knowledge of the Indian Ocean worlds has best been illustrated by seven epic naval missions undertaken by a Chinese mariner and diplomat of Islamic faith, known to us as Zheng He (born *c.* 1371, Kunyang, China; died 1433, Calicut, India). Eighty-seven years before Christopher Columbus's first transatlantic voyage in 1492, Zheng He the greatest navigator of Ming China (1368–1644), led a massive fleet sailing from the South China Sea across the Indian Ocean between 1405 and 1433.[11] His first sailing mission of discovery began in 1405 and ended in 1407. The Chinese fleet under his command visited Champa, Siam, Malacca, Java, Calicut and Ceylon. It consisted of 317 ships, including sixty-two colossal "treasure-ships", and some 27,800 soldiers, officers, and civilian personnel.[12] Ibn Battuta writes about meeting Chinese merchants at the port of Calicut. During his second voyage, between 1408 and 1409, Zheng He returned to Calicut and visited Cochin and Ceylon. During the third mission, in 1409 he went beyond South Asia and reached Hormuz on the Arabian Peninsula. In 1413, during his fourth voyage, he reached Dhofar and Aden and some members of the fleet sailed to present-day Somalia and Kenya, nearing Mozambique. By 1415, he is reputed to have visited thirty states of South and South East Asia as a diplomat and gathered emissaries from these places to pay homage to the Ming Emperor

9 Chaudhuri 1985.
10 Ottenheimer 1991, 125–134.
11 Blue *et al.* 2014.
12 Blue *et al.* 2014, xiii.

Yongle (born 1360; died 1424). The fifth voyage between 1417 and 1419 focussed on the Persian Gulf and East Coast Africa. The sixth voyage began in 1421 with the aim to returning the emissaries to their homelands. Zheng He's seventh and final voyage was in 1431. After visiting the Arab Peninsula and Africa, he died in 1433 in Calicut.[13] This came to an abrupt end when the Ming Emperor Xuande (born 1399; died 1435), grandson of Emperor Yongle, radically ended the voyages.

Zheng He and his fleet, can best be described as voyages of discovery coupled by the aim to extend the hegemony of the Ming Emperor beyond the South China Sea. His expeditions were backed by the Ming Emperor Yongle. Without the Ming Dynasty's institutional support to cartography and navigation and without imperial financial patronage these voyages would have been impossible. These were networks of trade and sovereignty that Zheng He was trying to establish. The Chinese respected and upheld the idea that the ocean constituted a maritime space open to people of all religions and ethnicities. Admiral Zheng He's fleet, much larger and stronger than Da Gama's also anchored in Malabar several times, but did not resort to violence. These voyages were not undertaken in order to create a "naval empire". The political and economic aims of these voyages have not fully been explored by historians. The economic impact of these expeditions was minimal. If anything, they produced tributes for the Ming Emperor. The novelty lay in the direct contacts that were established between Africa and China. Although there were no Chinese attempts to gain control over the seas, these expeditions were an important chapter in the process of globalization. Zheng He and his fleets were brokers and agents in cross-cultural trade and diplomatic relations bringing into contact different land and sea-based polities with the Chinese imperial seat in Beijing. There is no evidence that the interactions between Ming China and other Asian polities altered the geo-politics of the region. Beyond their own ports, the Chinese had no naval presence in the Indian Ocean world. What is relevant is that the scholarship on Zheng He's history is not just significant for Chinese, Asian and African history but also for global history as a whole. While conventional Euro-centric historiography lays emphasis on the European "Age of Discovery/Exploration", which preceded the "Age of Commerce", Zheng He's expeditions reveal extraordinary Chinese successes in building complex maritime networks which facilitated trade, migration, knowledge circulation, cultural exchanges, and economic and political relationships between China and

13 Fang and Li, 2005. In 2002, in a popular and provocative book, Gavin Menzies argued that Zheng He "circumnavigated" the globe in 1421. Menzies, 2002. For a very critical review of Menzies, see a review by Finlay 2004, 229–242. Also Sen 2006, 421–453.

the states of the Indian Ocean world. In some instances it can be described as "tributary empire", but Zheng's expeditions cannot be described as the making of a Chinese "naval empire".

With the rise of three large empires—the Ottoman Empire centred in the eastern Mediterranean, the Safavid Empire in present-day Iran and the Mughal Empire in present-day India, Pakistan and Afghanistan—the sixteenth century witnessed a flourishing of trade and commerce. These Empires exercised influence on key ports in the Arabian Sea littoral, leading to an increase in the volume of traded commodity. South Asia's exports included cotton textiles and raw silk, a variety of spices like pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, mace, ginger, cumin and turmeric. Other export commodities included perfumes, sandalwood, coir, indigo, opium, diamonds and other gems. Elephants, peacocks, parrots, turkey and many more items were also traded.

Since antiquity, merchants, mariners, mercenaries, warriors, slaves, refugees, criminals, pilgrims, pirates, mutineers, explorers and many others connected ports of south Asia with the Arab world, north and east Africa and south-east Asia.[14] Accounts by early travellers alluding to luxuries from the east i.e., spices, specially pepper, gold and gems, was etched in the minds of Europeans and excited their imaginations from Roman times. The Afro-Eurasian world was always connected and Roman coins are often found by archaeologists on the east and west coast of South Asia.[15] Maritime links between India and China existed since the first century BCE. South Asian ports were important transshipment centers for both Chinese and Roman goods.[16] In fact, it has been suggested that the interconnectedness of the Indian Ocean may be much older and contacts through the Persian Gulf date back to the third millennium BCE. This has been explored in detail through interdisciplinary lenses.[17] The connectedness of the Indian Ocean world with the Afro-Eurasian world demonstrates long-standing trading relations. South Asian ports were multicultural pluralistic trading nodes and had been home to traders and settlers from the surrounding regions for centuries. People, cultures, ideas and religions passed through them without hindrance. These port cities were dynamic and porous spaces, where different cultures came into contact with each other, often without much friction. People, goods, ideas and cultural forms flowed uninterrupted in multiple directions around and across the South Asian sub-continent, the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. They were gateways through which different cultures

14 Subrahmanyam 1997.
15 McLaughlin 2010; Suresh 2004 and Turner, 2016.
16 Sen 2006, 421–453.
17 Autiera 2016.

permeated into the hinterlands. Prior to Europe's entry onto the scene at the end of fifteenth century, this was already a well-connected and thoroughly navigated space, connecting China and the eastern coast of Africa. Most Indian trade was directed to South East Asia and China.[18] The "globalized" Asian maritime trade network was already in place before the arrival of the Europeans with their powerful artillery fitted on to their ships. The history of the Europeans in the Indian Ocean World from 1498 to 1859 is a complex, fragmented and multifaceted one that cannot be reduced to "maritime empires" with London, Amsterdam and Lisbon as centres and the rest as peripheries.[19]

European Mercantilism in the Indian Ocean World

In order to have direct access to Asian products, Europeans, initiated a search for a sea-route to Asia. Christopher Columbus (born 1451, Genoa; died May 20, 1506, Valladolid, Spain) ended up in the Americas and Vasco da Gama (born c. 1460; died December 24, 1524, Cochin, India), became the first European to successfully sail to Malindi on the east coast of Africa where he met traders who had knowledge of the monsoon winds and sea-routes to South Asia. With the help of local sailors in May 1498, he sailed from Malindi to Calicut, on the Malabar Coast, 92 years after Zheng He's arrival there. With this epochal event, the existing sea-routes of the Mediterranean and the emerging Atlantic world became linked to the centuries-old trading routes of the Indian Ocean world. In Calicut, a peaceful trading port where ships from many nations docked to collect spices and textiles, Da Gama and his men unleashed violence: robbing the ships and killing the crew, traders and inhabitants of the city, using their cannon fitted ships.[20]

Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama, standing on the shores of Portugal and Spain, before embarking on their journey to search for a sea-route to India and China, could surely not have foreseen the level of European political and economic domination that happened at a global scale by the mid-nineteenth century with varied consequences for America, Africa and Asia. They were not setting out to build a "maritime empire", "merchant empires" or "colonial empires". They sought wealth in finding alternative trading routes so that they could participate in the lucrative trade in Asian commodities.[21]

18 De la Vassière 2013, 202–207.
19 For a similar critical view of this model see also Antunes in this volume.
20 Subrahmanyam 1997.
21 Burbank and Cooper 2010.

The usage of the sea-route, after Vasco da Gama's rounding of the Cape of Storms—later re-named Cape of Good Hope—in 1498, introduced a greater number of Europeans visiting the South Asian sub-continent than in previous centuries, yet this so called "Age of Discovery" did not particularly impact the Indian Ocean trade adversely for the first couple of centuries.[22] Research from South Asia has started to lay bare how the Europeans actually underwent a protracted and often conflicting process of survival in the Indian Ocean world and in the ports of South Asia during the early modern times.[23]

Da Gama's charting of the sea-route to Asia did unleashed five hundred years of tyranny whereby Europeans not only exported vast amounts of wealth but also slaves from India. Histories of European nations, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French or be it the British, of the early modern and modern times, get written with a sense of success: how successful were the Iberian kingdoms, the East India Companies and how large and efficient the empires or networks they built. Success is termed in notions of profit made by the companies and later "civilizing" missions undertaken by Europeans. It is often a story of efficiently extracting commodity and profit, without bothering about the expenses of administering the territories. Few accounts are written that record the extreme exploitation of the colonized people and the plundering of their resources in the name of trade, which was undertaken for the sole enrichment of the colonizing nations. A sense of nostalgia and pride in "European expansion" remains.

The arrival, although violence laden, worked, in some ways, favourably for South Asia in the next two centuries. South Asian goods, especially textile and spices, became very popular and created new consumer markets in Europe. South Asian textiles were introduced in West Africa and later in the Americas.[24] While the Portuguese dominated the sixteenth century trade between Europe and Asia, South Asian weavers, farmer and merchants also benefitted from the increasing demand for South Asian products. The Portuguese had few commodities that were in demand in South Asia and therefore paid for Indian goods in gold and silver.[25] The Portuguese by this time, were one of the numerous merchant groups operating in the Indian Ocean waters. Similarly Dutch and English merchants and travellers also explored the sea-route to Asia and within it, in search of profitable trade.

22 Furber 2004.
23 Das Gupta and Dasgupta 2004 and Bose 2009.
24 Riello 2013.
25 Disney 2010.

Europeans participated in the Indian Ocean trade in three distinct modes. The first mode of operation was the *Estado da India* of the Portuguese whereby the territories in Asia under Portuguese control were considered to be part of the Portuguese kingdom. The second mode of operation was through the chartered companies. Several European nations established East India Companies and declared monopolies on the import of Asian goods into their nations. The third mode of operation was sometimes legal and at other times illegal. Under this mode, one can classify all individual private trade that various European company employees undertook. Individuals rented shipping spaces from the East India Companies. While some companies allowed private trade in some goods, others forbade it. Nonetheless goods were brought into Europe legally or illegally by individuals.

In 1494 the Treaty of Tordesillas had been signed between Spain and Portugal in order to avoid conflict between two the Catholic states. The Pope thus divided the world into two halves. After this, the Portuguese assumed that they had the right to rule over all areas east of Cape Verde. In Christendom, the Indian Ocean was declared as Portuguese territory. They seized Goa and established other enclaves where the Portuguese Inquisition unleashed atrocities. A system of imposing taxes and issuing passes called *cartazes*, was put in place. Non-compliers were labelled as "pirates".[26] The Portuguese thus began their attempts to control South Asian waters. Up till now, no Eurasian sovereign had claimed rights over the seas. Not the Mings, neither the Mughals, Arabs or Africans. They restricted their dominion on the land and on the ports in their territories. The seas were free and for all. Merchants visiting the ports paid to the Shahbandar, a port master. In the beginning, Asian, Arab and African merchants ignored the Portuguese and went about their business as usual, except when held at gun-point and when they were forced to pay and buy the *cartazes*. Portuguese fleet was neither large nor efficient but because they carried canons, and their men were armed, they were able to terrorize the Indian Ocean traders.

Around 1600, various competing European merchant companies established themselves as joint-stock trading companies aiming at monopolizing trade in certain commodities. Thus, the seventeenth century saw the onslaught of many different Europeans in the Indian Ocean world. Different East India companies sought permission to build fortresses in Asia in order to protect themselves from other competing Europeans. In some cases, indigenous rulers like the Raja of Cochin granted exclusive rights, first to the Portuguese

26 Boyajian 1993.

in 1505 and later to the Dutch in 1663. In other cases, like the Mughal port of Surat and in Bengal, several European companies had their settlements and had to co-exist, sometimes in close proximity. The Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, the Danes and the British had establishments in Bengal. The situation in Surat and Coromandel was comparable. Everyone was trying to get a foot into the Indian Ocean trading world in order to buy commodities for their domestic and colonial markets. They also competed to have an upper hand in the Asian trade. While they had to co-exist and co-operate in order to survive, often competition was very tough and European rivalries were played out in Asia.

In the seventeenth century, the European East India Companies stimulated the South Asian economy by bringing bullion to pay for South Asian commodities.[27] South Asian merchants, meeting the increasing European demands, benefited from the presence of Europeans. Asian merchants were often organized in family firms that had evolved over centuries. They often functioned as money lenders to the European companies.

Thus, various European powers that operated in the Indian Ocean under the umbrella of trading companies. They had monopolies at home for trading in and with Asia. Each company functioned differently but they more or less followed a pattern of metamorphosing from traders to land-lords.[28] By mid-eighteenth century they brought more and more land under their jurisdiction and instead of functioning as traders, they functioned as state: collecting tolls and taxes, administering justice. This is discussed more in detail in the next section. The Estado da India, right from the start had a different mode of operations. They functioned as part of Portuguese kingdom and their officials were servants of the Portuguese crown. The various companies and their activities can best be characterized as early modern trading networks operating in the context of commercial and diplomatic treaties and as warriors and conquerors in the name of commerce. Their activities were backed by their governments and crowns, ideologically, financially and in terms of armies and navies. They used violence to operate in Asia and violence against each other in Europe to protect and compete in trade. In Europe, for example s series of Anglo-Dutch and Anglo-French wars were fought over trade and overseas possessions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Seven Years was (1756–1763) was also fought out in Asia. The Dutch East India Company's activities in South Asia has been described as "merchant-warrior".[29] With time, they started to

27 Prakash 2004.
28 Singh 2010, 45–89.
29 Winius and Vink 1994.

operate as quasi-states, i.e., collecting taxes. What all Europeans—the Portuguese, British, Dutch, French and Danes– had in common was the reign of terror they unleashed in the Indian Ocean world on Asians and Africans, in the name of trade.

In contrast, there were other congruent trans-cultural and trans-religious networks of Africans, Arabs, Gujarati and Chetty and many other merchants operating in the Indian Ocean world that had no state or crown backing. Islam or Hinduism was not forcefully imposed on communities where Asian merchants went to trade. Migrant mercantile communities like the Armenians and Jewish community also played very prominent roles in the Indian Ocean world. These trading communities were not backed by the political elites of the lands they were resident in or originally belonged to. They operated independently with extensive networks based on family and religious ties. They also competed for goods and markets, but violence was not used in the name of trade. Also, their ships were not cannon fitted.

The Portuguese, as well as the other Europeans, were secretive of the information they gathered about commodities, sea-routes, detailed navigational maps, contracts and treaties with Asian powers etc. But one state did not control the sea-routes. The Portuguese Estado da India did impose *cartazes* but these were limited to ports where they were allowed to settle in. Other ports remained free for all traders, as long as they paid taxes applicable to all.[30]

During the centuries under discussion, European men freely married Asian women. Survival depended on day to day interaction with the local population.[31] The Europeans built several institutions to manage the population that was connected to the East India Companies, mostly servants of the companies and their families. Mixed marriages were the norm as European women did not undertake the long sea-journey to Asia. Indo-Portuguese, Indo-Dutch, Anglo Indian communities came into existence and numerous examples of mixed marriages and families have been recorded. The virtual absence of European women is an important aspect of family life in European settlements. Most mothers, sisters, wives and daughters, were women of mixed ethnicity (mestizo) and by default a typical family unit—the natural and fundamental unit of society—was a multi-ethnic one. A vivid depiction of mestizo society can be found in an early description of Nagappattinam, a Dutch settlement on the Coromandel Coast. In his travel account Wouter Schouten states that most of the Dutch people there were married to mestizo women who dressed

30 Subrahmanyam 2012.

31 Malekandathil 2001 and Singh 2010.

according to their own tradition and spoke good Portuguese. With difficulty, they spoke some Dutch. They were also Christians.[32]

The Christianized population, like the Indo-Portuguese, Indo-Dutch, Anglo Indian communities and the Malabar merchants played an important role in narrowing the distance between those living inside European fortified port-towns of Goa, Cochin, Madras, Bombay etc., and those outside it. There were commercial and personal relations established by individuals living on both sides of the wall. The mestizos had a crucial role in the ongoing process of adaptation on the part of European servants of the Company. Contacts with other merchants, Christian, Muslims, Hindus, or Jews, led to the creation of networks which were economic in nature. Mestizo women created family and social networks and ties for the European and later Indo-European men. The presence of European women and a racially segregated society emerged more strongly after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, when European women made the journey to Asia more often. This was also when full-fledged colonialism and imperialism was established from the mid-18th century onwards. The strings of settlements of the various Europeans companies in the 16th and 17th centuries in the Indian Ocean region can be characterized as sovereign backed commercial networks that took to war and diplomacy, but not maritime or naval empires.

Trading in Sovereignty: a Transformation from Company to State

In the eighteenth century, the profit margins of the different European companies started to decline. Their business model was not as profitable as it used to be. New markets opened up and new commodities became popular. They got involved in expensive wars with rival Europeans as well as South Asian powers in the Indian subcontinent. They had built fortified settlements, the upkeep of which was expensive. Rivalling European states, who were involved in the Seven Years War in Europe also fought battles in South Asia through the East India Companies. The Dutch in Java and the English in South Asia took to plantation systems for procuring coffee and tea. They acquired land and started taxing the inhabitants and commodities produced in the regions administered by them. They were also now functioning as providers of raw material for the Industrial Revolution; for example from South Asia, raw cotton and indigo was exported in large quantities.

At this time, ideas of Physiocracy had started to gain currency in Europe. Physiocrats, part of French Enlightenment, believed that land is the source of all

32 Schouten 1676, 179a–80a.

wealth.[33] Although they also advocated non-interference by governments, most European governments were too involved in the operation of the East India Companies to let them function independently. Thus, when companies started annexing land and collecting taxes, the governments did not interfere. In fact, when needed, governments supported the companies to function as land-lords rather than traders. Thus Britain and the Dutch Republic respectively supported the metamorphosis of the English and Dutch East India Companies.

As profits from trading started to decline and land was valued as a permanent source of income, The European trading companies started to transform from traders to landlords. An analysis of the change that the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Malabar, for example, underwent during the years 1750–84 enables us to redefine the nature of the VOC's activities in South Asia. Analysing VOC account books, it becomes clear that there was a remarkable growth in the non-trade income of the Malabar in the first half of the eighteenth century. This was followed by a period of slower growth in the period 1750–1784. From only 5 per cent of the gross profit, in 1697, income from land rose to 31 per cent of the gross profit. In 1779–1780, it added up to 38 per cent of the gross profit. The Dutch Company extended its fiscal administration far beyond the walls of Fort Cochin. By bringing more and more land under the Company's control and taking over the fiscal administration, they made their presence in Malabar more concrete and extended the Dutch presence beyond the coast. By bringing land under the purview of the Company, the VOC's establishment in Malabar appeared more permanent. With these efforts, income from land became more important than in the seventeenth century. The Company in Malabar thus underwent a metamorphosis from a pacified merchant-warrior to a landlord, imposing and collecting excises, customs and taxes and claiming rights on land.[34] It is at this stage that one can refer to the Dutch presence in the Indian Ocean world as a proto-colonial state.

During this period, the English East India Company (EIC) also emerged as the most powerful European power in the region. After the battles of Plassey in the north (1757) and of Wandiwash in the south (1760), it became clear that other European powers on the subcontinent could not match the EIC's economic and military might. The EIC in Bengal was also functioning in similar fashion as the Dutch, except that in many ways their transformation was quicker and had taken place earlier.[35] During the eighteenth century the EIC went through an

33 Steiner 2003.
34 Singh 2010, 88–89.
35 Guha 1996.

enormous transformation from a trading entity to a veritable state. By 1772, the EIC in Bengal had 15 million subjects, 33 thousand troops and was extracting three and a half million pounds in revenues. Figures from other parts of India are separate. In this address to the Directors of the EIC, it was also made clear that the fate of India and England was tied together as one did not know "what that revenue may be hereafter raised to". This was followed by an invitation to the Company to unite with Parliament.[36] British Government became more and more interested in its modes of operations. The colonial mentality is very clear from here on. Trade was no more valuable; maximum extraction of revenue and raw material for the Industrial Revolution was. The nature of "trade" had changed. The goal of the Company and the British state was amalgamated into one. Their political and economic aims coincided. They start to interact with each other and towards South Asia in a different way. By 1820, the Company's administration was a fully functional colonial state.

Thus, there was a complete change in the mode of operation. No longer trade, but taxes, which is an extraction, was the new "profitable" business model. Britain henceforth did not aim to further trade through mercantilist policies but blatantly sought to control territories and subjects who could be taxed. Their entire character of operations changes to fuel the Industrial Revolution. How this change came about is complex and connected to both internal and external factors within Britain and South Asia. But the relationship with South Asia is no more as regions from which the EIC collected textiles, spices and other commodities for importing to Europe or re-exporting to Africa and America, but South Asia was seen as a source of limitless revenue extraction. The 1858 and 1877 proclamations of Queen Victoria were important landmarks in the creation of British colonial empire. Other Europeans, including the Dutch also metamorphosed in comparable ways.

Conclusions

Seen from a political structure perspective, empires are large political units, often expansionist and functioning with a distinct hierarchy, headed by an emperor or empress. They are distinct from other early modern political units like kingdoms or sultanates. Colonial empires are distinct from other empires, for example tributary or maritime empires. In the early modern and modern world, empire has a unique and specific political connotation. Louis XIV was

36 *Anonymous* MDCCLXXII.

King of France but the Holy Roman Empire elected Emperors; Napoleon took the title of Emperor and only then begins the French empire. Similarly, Victoria was Queen of England and later in 1877 crowned empress of India. After decolonization of India, the British crown returned to title of King or Queen. So, one can write of a British and French colonial empire, but not of Dutch colonial empire. It would be erroneous to use the varied activities of the VOC and WIC to argue for a Dutch colonial empire. A more specific term would be the Dutch colonial state. It seems that there is a trend in Dutch historiography that since the British and the French had empires, the Dutch must (in historiography) have one too. Such narrations are misleading and perhaps underpinned by nostalgic ideas of grand colonial empire building projects of the past. While writing the histories of Afro-Eurasian connections, maritime or otherwise, using the umbrella term of empire from circa 1500 onwards right up to 18th and 19th century's colonial empires leads to teleological problems: i.e., efforts of finding uniformity and projecting backward the apparent 19th century political and economic dominance of Europe. This long protracted process spanning 500 years needs to be dissected and characterized based on their unique features. In this article I have leaned on a purely political lens to investigate trade, war and diplomacy in the early modern period and their characterization in historiography. How the East India Companies developed from trading organizations, based in port town and cities, to sovereign like organizations aiming at the control of land for revenue extraction has been analysed. Why the Europeans underwent this metamorphosis in the 18th century and other trading communities did not, remains a matter of debate.

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CHAPTER 11

The Melaka Empire, *c.* 1400–1528

Peter Borschberg

Introduction: Definition and Issues of Territoriality

The history of the Melaka Empire, or Melaka Sultanate, spans little over a century, from the generally accepted founding of the city and port at the beginning of the fifteenth century until the expulsion of the last sultan, Mahmud Shah II, by the Portuguese in 1511.[1] Arguably, the Melaka Empire does not end with the expulsion of the sultan from his capital city, but continued for another two decades until the end of the 1520s with the death of Sultan Mahmud.

At its apex, the Melaka Empire is said to have exerted control over populations living on most of the Malay Peninsula, parts of central and eastern Sumatra, the Riau Archipelago and even parts of south-west Borneo (Fig. 1). The term 'exerted control over populations' has been carefully chosen in this context, as it would be fallacious to conceptualize and understand the premodern Malay polity of Melaka as a territorially defined empire evocative of a modern European nation state that was bounded, territorially defined and administratively centralized. As has been convincingly argued by several authors of Southeast Asian history—notably Anthony Milner, but also Oliver Wolters and Tony Day—pre-colonial Malay rulers were not preoccupied with territory.[2] Rather, Malay rulers aspired to increase their *nama* (standing, reputation), and in so doing hoped to lift their status within the hierarchy of Asian rulers.[3] They were also concerned to augment their population by attracting followers, or new subjects, as a as a way of expressing their prosperity in a fluid patron-client relationship.[4] The followers were called 'vassals' in the precolonial European sources, but one should not think of these as vassals in a European sense. Minor rulers, who styled themselves *rajas* (princes), not only voluntarily submitted themselves to other rulers higher up in the hierarchy,

1 This chapter was written while serving as a Visiting Professor at the Asia-Europe Institute at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

2 Milner, 1982; Milner, 1995; Day 2002; Wolters 1982.

3 Milner, 1982, 101, 104–111, 114; Milner, 2008, 66–67.

4 Concerning patron-client relationships in precolonial Southeast Asia, and specifically its relation to bonded labour and slavery, see Reid and Castles, 1975.

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FIGURE. 11.1 Map of Melaka
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but sometimes also acknowledged more than one overlord at any one time. In this sense also, the Melaka sultan is said to have been (simultaneously or at different times) a tributary of two other great rulers: the king of Siam and the Chinese emperor (Fig. 11.1).[5]

5 Hierarchy among the rulers has been thought to mirror the situation at the different Malay royal courts; see esp. Milner, 1982, 104–106, and Milner, 1995, 66–67.

Sources

The primary sources for the genesis, flourishing, and decline of the Melaka Empire fall into three broad categories. The first are Malay-language sources of an epic literary genre such as the *Sulalat-us-Salatin* (better-known as the *Malay Annals*) as well as the *Hikayat Hang Tuah.*[6] The *Malay Annals* are shaped around a historic core that is believed to have assumed the form of the king list. This rudimentary genealogy was later expanded and has been dubbed a 'morality tale'.[7]

A second set of sources are the Melaka laws that comprise two separate texts. The first of these is known as the *Risalat Hukum Kanun Melaka,* but is now normally referred to as the *Undang-undang Melaka* (Laws of Melaka). Its origin can be traced back to the middle of the fifteenth century, but the text familiar to readers today also contains provisions that date from a later period.[8] The Laws of Melaka sometimes have been considered to be a type of legal digest, but this has been questioned.[9] Another text is the *Undang-undang Laut Melaka* (Maritime Laws of Melaka).[10] These are believed to have been written as a supplement to the Laws of Melaka, and now are taken to represent a stand-alone text. The Maritime Laws stake out the authority of various officers aboard a vessel by comparing them to supposed counter-parties on land.

A third set was written by Asian authors during the pre-colonial period. Included here are materials of Chinese origin, such as the texts touching on the voyages of Admiral Zheng He (sometimes Cheng Ho) and also the *Ming Shi-Lu,* a source known in English as the *Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty*.[11] The Chinese testimonies (many of which remain untranslated) are also supplemented by materials of west-Asian origin, such as Arab, Ottoman, or Persian writings. Arguably, they are strongest and most informative for the centuries preceding 1400, before Melaka had been (re-) founded by Parameswara.[12]

A fourth set bridges both the pre-colonial as well as the colonial period. This includes the account of pre-colonial Melaka contained in the travelogue of

6 Brown and Roolvink, 1970; Ahmad, 1968.

7 Cheah and Borschberg, 2013.

8 Winstedt, 1953, 31–33.

9 Ronkel, 1919; Liaw 1976.

10 Winstedt and Josselin de Jong, 1956. Islamic maritime law and navigational practices has been the focus of discussion by Khalilieh, 1998, 2019.

11 The open-access edition of this source is available via www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/. Concerning the beginnings of Chinese contacts with Melaka and arrival of Zheng He's fleets generally, see also Chang, 2019; Suryadinata, 2005; Wade, 2005, 2007; Wang, 1964, 1970, 2005.

12 Tibbetts, 1971 and 1979. In his 'Report on the Golden Chersonese' Manuel Godinho de Erédia identified Parameswara as a Javanese from Balambuan who had arrived in Singapore

the Italian traveler and adventurer Ludovico de Varthema, the letters of the Portuguese captives in Melaka written 1509–11, John of Empoli's letters, as well as the *Suma Oriental* of Tomé Pires.[13] This latter source, thought to have been written 1513–15, has been extensively cited, and for this reason arguably ranks as the single most authoritative source explaining the institutions of Melaka and its commercial practices before 1511.[14]

In addition to Pires, there are also insights to be gleaned from the Portuguese chronicles of the sixteenth century that include João de Barros, Gaspar Correia, and Fernão Lopes de Castanheda.[15] A selection from Portuguese materials published in their original as well as an English translation were published by Malaysian National Archives in 1993 and 2012–2014.[16] Among the most consulted texts are the letters of Alfonso de Albuquerque as well as the *Commentaries of Alfonso de Albuquerque*, a chronicle compiled by Alfonso's son Brás.[17] Other useful materials from the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries include the writings of Manuel Godinho de Erédia.[18]

Studies touching on the Melaka Sultanate are uneven in terms of the resourcefulness demonstrated by their authors and the depth with which they engage the surviving primary materials. Lim Pui Huen published a useful bibliography for Melaka studies in 1983.[19] Among the principal publications is a two-volume collection edited by Paul Wheatley and Kernial Singh Sandhu in 1983.[20] In addition to these are the authoritative studies of the Malaysian historian Muhammad Yusoff Hashim and of the Portuguese historian Luís Filipe Thomaz.[21] Works of a general nature published since the 1960s include Paul Wheatley, Anthony Reid, M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofsz and Peter Borschberg. Studies on Melaka's laws include Yock Fang Liaw and Khasnor Johan that supplement

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in the year 1398. See ibid., 229. Pires, 2017, 241n1245, explains that Parameswara is not a name, but a title. The individual in question was married to a Majapahit princess. Additional information on founding of Singapore in Kwa, 2017; Heng, Kwa, Borschberg and Tan, 2019.

13 Jones, 1928; Spallanzani, 1999; Bausani, 1970; Cortesao, 1944, 1978. Loureiro, 1996.

14 See the new Portuguese edition of the text by Loureiro, 2017, as well as several publications by Thomaz cited below.

15 de Barros and do Couto, 1777–1778; Correira, 1858–1866; Lopes de Castanheda, 1924–1933.

16 Pintado, 1993 and 2012–2014.

17 de Albuquerque, 1973; Dalboquerque, 1875–1895. Excerpts with English translation in Pintado, 1993.

18 Godinho de Erédia, 1882; Erédia, 2008. For an English translation of both texts, see Erédia, 1882.

19 Lim, 1983, 623–761.

20 Singh Sandhu and Wheatley, 1983.

21 Muhammad Yusoff, 1992; Thomaz, 1990, 1991, 1994, 2000b.

the older exposés by Richard O. Winstedt, J. E. de Josselin de Jong, and Philip van Ronkel.[22] Ahmat Adam, Cheah Boon Keng, John H. Walker and before them Winstedt have explored connections with Malay literature, especially to the *Malay Annals* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. Meanwhile, Gungwu Wang, Roderich Ptak and Geoff Wade have examined Melaka's mercantile and tributary connections with China during the Ming dynasty.[23] Additional writings of a specialist nature cover Melaka's role in developing the Malay language and also the spread of Islam across insular and peninsular Southeast Asia.[24] Some secondary sources, moreover, have explored the real and imagined relations of Melaka (together with other Southeast Asian sultanates) and the Ottoman Empire.[25] Then there is the issue of the imperial turn. While this has had a significant impact, for example, in the context of studying the Ottoman Empire during the early modern period, there is presently no comparable historiographical counterpart for the Melaka Sultanate. Quite to the contrary, the propensity today in Malaysia is to push back from the idea of 'empire' on account of the largely negative connotations now associated with the term in this part of the former British Empire.[26]

Background to the Founding of Melaka

The historical background to Melaka's founding around the early 1400s has been discussed in several key publications, though there is at least one study from 2012 that argues for an earlier founding of the *kerajaan* (loosely 'kingdom') in 1262.[27] The most recognizable to readers of English are the discussions by Wheatley, especially his two books *The Golden Khersonese* and *Impressions of the Malay Peninsula.*

It is now accepted to situate the founding of Melaka within different contexts. With reference to the broader context this treats Melaka as a symptom

22 Wheatley, 1961; Wheatley 1964; Reid, 1988–1993; Meilink-Roelofsz 1962; Borschberg, 2008; Liaw, 1976; Khasnor 1999. See also de Josselin de Jong and van Wijk, 1960: 20–29; Aubin and Thomaz 2007, 107–138.

23 Ptak, 2004; Wade, 1997; Wang, 1964; Wang, 1970.

24 Bellwood, 2007; Ezzati, 2002; Tan, 2009; Wade, 2010.

25 Peacock and Gallop, 2015.

26 Concerning the imperial turn and the Ottoman Empire, see Mikhail and Phillou, 2012. A landmark conference on Melaka during the long 15th century is scheduled for 2019. In this conference Melaka will not be viewed through the prism of 'empire' of either a territorial or thalassocratic archetype in what could be dubbed an anti-imperial turn.

27 Abdul Rahman b. Ismail, Abdullah Zakariah b. Ghazali and Zulkanain b. Abdul Rahman, 2012. Their position contradicts earlier accounts of the founding of Melaka such as notably by Wheatley, 1964, and Wang, 1968.

of urbanization across the region during the middle ages.[28] At the geographic heart of this region are the Melaka Straits and the seasonal shifts of the monsoon winds that in the age of sail brought traders from across Asia to the shores of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. The region had seen a contest for maritime supremacy over the Straits in which the competing powers sought to attract as much trade as possible. For this reason, historians have spoken of thalassocracies or sea-borne empires. During the middle ages the most important thalassocracy in the Straits region was Srivijaya, a maritime polity that was centered around present-day Palembang on Sumatra.[29] Melaka is deemed to have been one of the principal heirs of Srivijaya in the Straits region.[30]

Srivijaya's decline unleashed a competition for the domination of trade and trading routes around the Malay Peninsula, the Riau Archipelago, and the western South China Sea. Competing to fill the vacuum left by a receding or weakening Srivijaya were two polities. In the north was Siam, an agriculturally rich kingdom that was consolidating its power in the area of present-day Thailand and further extending its influence down to the Malay Peninsula. Melaka—and Temasek-Singapura before it—were said to have been (at one time) tributaries of Siam. To the south was the Majapahit empire that was centered on Java. It, too, was extending its influence to cover parts of eastern Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. Both Siam and the Majapahit Empire claimed Temasek-Singapura (hereafter simply Singapore) for themselves during Singapore's golden century between approximately 1290 and c.1400.

It is here in Singapore that the more immediate context for the rise of Melaka can be found. Singapore was another heir of Srivijaya. It was a trading city that had reached its apex in the 1300s. Malay historical legend which is echoed in the writings of Tomé Pires, João de Barros and Brás de Albuquerque, brings the decline of Singapore into direct correlation with the rise of Melaka at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[31] Crucial to this episode is a Hindu prince from Palembang (or alternatively from Majapahit Java) who fled his homeland and sought refuge in Singapore.[32] For reasons unknown,

28 Concerning the medieval urbanization in Southeast Asia, see for example Reid, 1988–1990, and Hall, 1985.

29 Its existence remained unknown until the beginning of the twentieth century when it was hypothesized and discussed by George Coedès and later also Gabriel Ferrand. Srivijaya (or *San-fo-chi* as it was known from period Chinese sources) is also the focus of a study by Wolters, 1970.

30 Coedès, 1918, 1968; Ferrand, 1922; Wolters, 1970.

31 This is also followed by Wheatley in Kwa and Borschberg, 2018, 66–80.

32 Eredia, *Description,* 16, where it is explained that the 'xabandar' (shahbandar, head of the port) was related to the ruler of Pam (Pahang).

Parameswara murdered his host (variously named 'Sam Agy' or 'Tamagi' in the Portuguese sources, representing a corruption of the Javanese honorific *Sang Aji;*[33] in Erédia the murdered official has been described as the *shahbandar*); he then staged a coup d'état together with his supporters. The circumstances hereafter become murky. The murdered official of Singapore was said to have been a Siamese official. There are two strands in the story: One claims that he was an in-law of the Siamese monarch, while a second deems him to be the offspring of the king of Siam with a princess from Patani. Be this as it may, after the usurper Parameswara had ruled Singapore for about five years, the Siamese launched an attack on the city around 1396.[34] Parameswara later left (or should one rather say fled) town with his supporters, headed up the western coast of the peninsula and supposedly founded the settlement of Melaka.[35] But before moving on to discuss the growth of this newly-(re)founded settlement, a few more words need to be said about Singapore to help with the historical contextualization.

Prelude to the Founding of Melaka

A close reading of the Portuguese sources reveals that there may have been other troubles to explain Singapore's decline. In Tomé Pires we read that during Parameswara's rule in Singapore he and his followers were not creaming off the profits of trade, but in fact were eking out a meagre living from fishing, planting padi (rice) and 'plundering their enemies'.[36] The problems with Singapore's trading scene are supplemented by insights from both the chronicles of João de Barros as well as from the *Commentaries of Alfonso de Albuquerque*. Two reasons are worth summarizing in the present context.[37]

33 Erédia, 2017, 240n1234. There is also the possibility *Tamagi* might represent a corruption of the Malay title *temenggong.* The main duties of this official are outlined below.

34 Muhammad Yusof, 1992, 82. Sea-borne attacks by the Siamese were not uncommon. Ma Huan specifically highlighted the prowess of the Siamese at sea and in their overseas campaigns: Ma Huan, 1970, 107, 'They [i.e. the Siamese] like to practice fighting on water [and] their king constantly dispatches his commanders to subject neighbouring countries.'

35 The most recent archaeological finds seriously question this account. See '13-Century relics from Majapahit kingdom found beneath Malacca river' accessible at http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/13th-century-relics-from-majapahit-kingdom-found-beneath-malacca-river (accessed 9 January 2019).

36 Pires, 1944, II, 232.

37 For a more detailed discussion, see Borschberg, 2017, 37–39.

The first concerns weather patterns. Albuquerque in particular explains that violent storms hit the coast of Singapore, and often inflicted very serious damage to the vessels that were anchored in the port. 'Such tempests strike', he explained 'that the [ships] perish.'[38] This could be a reference to a weather phenomenon known as 'Sumatra squalls' which form over the island of Sumatra and the Melaka Straits during the pre-dawn hours and move as rain storms accompanied by lightning and strong winds toward the east.[39] The second concerns the turnaround time of merchants doing business in this region. Barros explains that the monsoon winds did not serve the merchant vessels for their entire passage through the Melaka Straits to Singapore and for this reason it was necessary for the vessels to interrupt the voyage and spend time 'halfway down the Straits'.[40] Barros further underscored that the voyage down the Strait (or alternatively along the western coast of Sumatra) was slow and that it was not possible to complete the return voyage in less than two years. The long turnaround time conditioned by the topography of the Straits as well as by the monsoon winds applied equally to ships arriving either from the west, or from the east.

It would not appear that direct competition from Melaka's rise triggered Singapore's decline, for the developments conditioning Singapore's decline were complex and include topography as well as the larger forces of nature. Violent storms mentioned in the Portuguese sources of the 1500s made Singapore a poor place to interrupt one's voyage and wait for the monsoon winds to change. Ships arriving with the south-western monsoon winds would only be able to sail about half-way down the Melaka Strait. Where those winds failed appears to have been approximately the location where Parameswara decided to set up his new base, first at Muar and later further up the coast at Melaka.

Melaka is thought to have been founded in the early 1400s, but a settlement was probably there already prior the city's (re-) founding by Parameswara. How old or large this settlement might have been is inconclusive. Still, we should take the statement by the Portuguese chronicler Gaspar Correa with caution when he claims that Melaka had already been a great trading emporium since the eighth century. The possibility cannot be excluded that he had confused this earlier port with another one along the western shores of the Malay Peninsula located further up the coast, perhaps as far as Kedah or even further up the coast at the Isthmus of Kra. A lot of the action took place around this land bridge that connects continental Asia with the Malay Peninsula. It is home to

38 De Albuquerque, 1973, II, 85.

39 Kwa, 2017, 67–68; Borschberg and Khoo, 2018, 11.

40 de Josselin de Jong and van Wijk, 1960, 22.

several historically important trading cities that for the period under review were subject to Siam.

This is an opportune moment to say a few words about Melaka's physical location along the western shore of the Malay Peninsula. The settlement was surrounded by marshland, and the area around the city was suited for growing rice or planting fruit orchards, but not vegetables. To encourage sufficient supplies of food streaming into the city, the sultanate waived taxation on food imports.[41] The city's vulnerability to supplies, however, remained unchanged for centuries. External food supplies were critical to Melaka, not just in Portuguese colonial times during the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries, but later also after the Dutch takeover of the city in 1641.[42]

Paul Wheatley and Oliver Wolters reckoned that Melaka had its origins in a 'pirate's lair'.[43] Its early success was fueled among other factors by a fairly open and unregulated trading space where merchants of all shades congregated to buy, sell and barter. Wheatley estimated the size of Melaka two decades after its founding at about six thousand inhabitants, a number that grew with later arrivals.[44] The inhabitants built their houses at the water's edge, and this appears to have remained unchanged until the first Portuguese arrived at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Rui d'Araujo reports in a letter dated 6 February 1510 that houses extended along the waterfront, but hardly land-inward.[45] He estimated the number of homes at ten thousand, and these would have been mostly constructed of wood, bamboo, and *atap.* Five hundred houses, Araujo also added, were made of 'earth', evidently a type of adobe. Empoli broadly corroborates this description in explaining that the settlement is 'situated near the sea-sore and thickly strewn with houses and rooms; and it stretches for three leagues which is most beautiful to see.'[46]

Another testimony claims that toward the end of the Melaka Sultanate the city had reached a permanent population of four thousand free men, plus their family members and their household slaves.[47] All the figures cited above testify to a degree of urbanization, but the numbers are a far cry from

41 On this point, and other insights into the Melaka's taxation policies, see esp. Thomaz, 2000a.

42 Borschberg, 2010.

43 See Wheatley, 1961, 306–325; Wheatley, 1964, 119–176. Also Wolters, 1967, 225, 'By the early fifteenth century Palembang had degenerated into a pirate lair, but the pirates of Malacca had become respectable harbor princes.'

44 Wheatley, 1964, 132–133.

45 Pintado, 1993, 132.

46 Bausani, 1970, 132.

47 Pintado, 1993, 132.

guesstimates in the hundreds of thousands dropped in some of the early Portuguese chronicles, such as by the aforementioned Correa.[48] During the peak trading season there was a large transient population of merchants and their family members who lived on ships and boats anchored off Melaka. It seems to have been customary among non-resident traders to remain at Melaka only for as long as was necessary to wind up one's business. If we are to believe the testimony of Varthema, Melaka was also a dangerous place to be, with merchants reported slain 'in cold blood like dogs'.[49] While doing their business merchants remained on their own vessels in relative safety.

Still, we should not forget that there were a number of resident merchants who are reported to have been fabulously wealthy. Damião de Góis (sometimes Goes) asserted that Melaka must have been the wealthiest town in the world because of the opulence of its resident merchants.[50] This wealth, he explained, was measured in *bahar* of gold, each Melaka *bahar* amounting to 4 *quintais* (of 59 kilograms) in Portuguese weight.[51] Measured in this way, some of Melaka's resident merchants were allegedly worth the equivalent of 10 or even 12 *bahar,* that is between around 2.4 and 2.8 metric tons of gold of unspecified purity. Despite some obvious heavyweights, the number of the fabulously rich was evidently limited. The sultan and some of his officials were also active in trade and were disinclined to broach rich and powerful rivals in his court and capital.

A sense of how busy the port had been is conveyed in the aforecited letter by Araujo from 1510. He claims that about 90 to 100 junks of all sizes were anchored in the port at any one point in time. He added that about 20 junks belonged to the local traders and another 150 *perahus*—a vessel type covering a wide range of sizes that could be as large as a junk—belonged to the sultan and his family.[52] If we take Araujo at his word, the local traders were 'all very weak', a reference to their capacity to arm their vessels (together with their men) and repel a future attack by the Portuguese.[53]

48 *Ibid*, 261.
49 Varthema, 1928, 84.
50 Pintado, 1993, 117.
51 *Ibid*.
52 Pintado, 1993, 132.
53 Pintado, 1993, 117.

Melaka's Rise *c.*1400–1450

How are we to understand the relatively rapid rise of Melaka over a period of about five decades? There are several factors at play here, and this section singles out four. The first has already been addressed in the previous section, namely the locational advantage of Melaka. This city was well situated in several respects: first, as the Portuguese chronicles have already intimated, the city and port is situated in a zone of monsoonal overlap. This facilitated Melaka's role as a meeting place for merchants arriving from different parts of Asia. In addition to this, due to the location of the Melaka Straits and the absence of open sea, the port was less exposed to violent storms and other natural disturbances such as tsunamis.[54] Admittedly, however, these conditions were best suited for catering to a particular type of trade that had grown over centuries in the Southeast Asian region. It is important to bear in mind that when the Dutch attempted to pluck the port from the Portuguese in 1606, they soon came to realize that Melaka was not located in a place that optimally catered to their needs. For this reason, the Dutch later chose to focus instead on an area located near the Sunda Strait.

The second factor in the rise of Melaka was the marriage of Parameswara's son, Iskandar Shah, to a princess from Pasai.[55] The latter was a prosperous city and polity located in north-eastern Sumatra and was an established port well before the (re-) founding of Melaka around 1400. It was arguably also its chief regional competitor for the entire lifespan of the Melaka Sultanate. Connected to this marriage was the Melaka ruler's conversion to Islam which would ensure his port's place within the Muslim maritime trading networks spanning the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. It was a strategic move just like the marriage to the Pasai princess. As Varthema observed with reference to the early sixteenth century: '[T]he pagans [i.e. Hindus, Buddhists] do not navigate much, but it is the Moors who carry the merchandise'.[56]

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54 Similarly de Albuquerque, 1973, II, 18, 93; and Dalboquerque 1875–1895, II, 84, 'This port of Malaca is very safe; there are no storms to injure it, and never was a ship lost there. It forms a point where some monsoons commence and others end. … Malaca is in the middle of all this, a sure and speedy navigation, such as Singapura never had. …'

55 Wolters, 1970, 160; Muhammad Yusoff, 1992, 185. Winstedt contended that Iskandar Shah and the legendary founder of Melaka, Parameswara, were one and the same individual, explaining that Parameswara had taken on a new name at the time of his conversion to Islam. See Winstedt, 1948, 726–29, see ibid., 727. On this claim and the problems surrounding the Melaka ruler 'Xarquem Darxa' [a corruption of 'Iskandar Shah'] mentioned by Pires and Erédia, see Wolters, 1970, 108–127.

56 Varthema, 1928, 151.

The factors leading to the conversion of Melaka's ruler to Islam are not entirely certain. One strand in the story has it that the ruler was converted to Islam through the personal intercession of the Chinese Admiral Zheng He, at the time of his visit to the Melaka court in the early fifteenth century.[57] Another strand in the story links the conversion of the Melaka ruler to Islam with his marriage to a princess from Pasai.

The third factor was the role Melaka would play both during and after the maritime voyages of Zheng He.[58] This is not the occasion to delve more deeply into either the reasons or the objectives of the Ming Chinese maritime voyages to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral. Important are two considerations: one, the militarily presence established by the Ming dynasty in the Melaka Straits during the period of the Zheng He voyages; two, Melaka's submission to the Chinese emperor as a tributary, and in turn, China's elevation of Melaka's ruler to the status of 'king'.[59] This move by the Chinese court was partially responsible for exacerbating tensions between two of its own tributaries: the kings of Siam and Melaka.[60] Melaka had been earlier a tributary of the Siamese (to whom the Melaka ruler paid annually 40 *taels* [about 1.2 kg] in gold), but after China's action (and perhaps even before), the Melaka rulers failed to pay tribute to Siam.[61] The Chinese factor in raising up the Melaka ruler, and after 1511 the sultan's attempts to gain support from the Ming court to evict the Portuguese, are understood in terms of a historically special relationship between Melaka and China.[62]

The fourth factor were specific developments that took place immediately before and after the coup d'état by Muzzafar Shah in 1445.[63] Iskandar Shah and Muhammad Shah, the third and fourth rulers of Melaka respectively, were Muslims. The fourth ruler of Melaka, however, assumed the name Parameswara and is thought to have been a Hindu. This latter Parameswara ruled only very briefly between 1444 and 1445 when Muzzafar seized power by force. Over the preceding four decades Melaka had grown considerably, and it was under the auspices of this usurper Muzzafar that an overhaul of the laws and political institutions took place. This included the creation of the office of the *laksamana*

57 Suryadatinata, 2005, esp. 83.
58 Wade 2005. He also compiled a collection of older publications that had appeared in the Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, see Wade, 2007.
59 Wheatley, 1961, 321–325.
60 On the fallout with Siam, see also Ptak, 2004, 7.
61 Wheatley, 1961, 321, 324; Borschberg, 2008. 34.
62 Cheah, 2012; 'Restore Melaka's Glory', http://www.pmo.gov.my (accessed 9 Jan. 2019).
63 Khasnor, 1999, 138n34.

(admiral) whose first officeholder (after 1456) was Hang Tuah, a hero said to have had personal and familial links to Singapore.[64]

The creation of the *laksamana* marked an important development in several respects. First, because the new offices emerged from the fusion of two officials: the *hulubalang besar,* a local military commander based at Singapore, and the *Sri Bija di Raja,* a military leader with general responsibilities for defense.[65] As a consequence, the *laksamana* served as one of the top merchant-officials, who in addition to his responsibilities in maritime defense also enjoyed certain powers over foreign emissaries and merchants.[66]

Second, with the responsibility for land and sea defenses separated, the *laksamana* soon emerged as the more important of the two. This is because as an 'empire' based on maritime trade, Melaka needed to regularly patrol the waters of the straits in order to keep rapacious neighboring tribes at bay. In this vein Rui d'Araujo and Tomé Pires wrote about Melaka's protracted naval conflict with the king of Aru who had a significant capacity to attack and plunder vessels.[67] Also, Melaka's marshy surroundings and hills covered in thick jungle acted as natural barriers to land-based attack on the city. Any major security threat to Melaka would have therefore come from across the adjacent maritime spaces. Seen this way, the city of Melaka somewhat resembled an island, an expression that is sometimes employed later in European documents.

The connection of the *laksamana* with Singapore is important in the present context: he commanded the loyalty of the *orang laut*, or sea-nomads, who inhabited the waters on both sides of the Singapore Straits. The *laksamana* also carried the titles or honorifics of *ketua orang laut* (a type of senior chief of the *orang laut*) and *Raja Selat* (Prince of the [Singapore] Straits).[68] The Melakan fleet that comprised around forty large galleys and other smaller support vessels had its base in Singapore, and these war galleys were manned by the *orang laut* who acted as rowers.[69] At the time of the Portuguese attack on Melaka in 1511, the galleys of the Melakan navy were not positioned

64 See Kassim, 1968. On the historic identity of Hang Tuah, see Ahmat, 2016. Also see Muhammad Yusoff, 1992, 219.

65 Muhammad Yusof, 1992, 98, 109, 217; Kwa and Borschberg, 2018, 131–138; Kwa, 1985, 124.

66 Pires, 1944, II, 264; Borschberg, 2017.

67 Pintado, 1993, 198; Pires, 1944, II, 244–255.

68 Concerning the role of the orang laut in general both during and also after the Melaka Sultanate (esp. in Johor), see the the chapters by Wheatley, Andaya, Muhammad Yusoff and Sopher in Kwa and Borschberg, 2018, 131–138; 155–178. See also the chapter by Chuleeporn Virunha in Sunait Chutintaronond and C. Baker, 2002, 143–166.

69 Pires, 1944, II, 264.

around the capital city. They had been stationed around Singapore and the Riau Islands, but were reportedly 'on their way' when the city fell to Albuquerque's onslaught.[70] The *laksamana* is reported by Brás de Albuquerque to have been around eighty years old and offered his services to Melaka's new masters, a claim that is also repeated in other Portuguese chronicles.[71] But the *laksamana* was subsequently dissuaded from proceeding to Melaka to discuss the next steps with Alfonso de Albuquerque by a letter from the head of Melaka's Javanese trading community, an individual named Utimutiraja (Utama di Raja) by Pires. The *laksamana* hereafter consolidated his residence and main base on Singapore. His continued presence here at Singapore and the revival of its port after the traumatic events of 1511 are believed to have triggered a Portuguese attack on Singapore, in the course of which the settlement with its medieval ruins are presumed to have been destroyed.[72] These ruins testifying to a former larger settlement were specifically mentioned in Albuquerque's *Commentaries*.

Officials and Business

Melaka's Islamization together with the aforementioned reforms spearheaded by Muzzafar Shah led to important changes in government. Many of the old (Hindu) titles, including *raja,* remained current, as was the exclusive use of the color yellow for royalty.[73] The myths and legends with their emphasis on cosmic order and the divinity of the ruler were set aside in favor of narratives that legitimized the ruler and his family within an Islamic stress on genealogy. This emphasized the ruler's pedigree and lineage.[74] In addition, the form of absolute monarchy associated with the Hindu rulers was changed. The new arrangement, reinforced by the Laws of Melaka, saw the Muslim ruler delegating day-to-day running of the affairs of state to his ministers, and especially to the

70 Pintado, 1993, 319. Melaka had fallen to the Portuguese before the *laksamana* could reach the scene of action. Hereafter he returned to Singapore and communicated with the new Portuguese masters by correspondence. Concerning the *laksamana's* return to Singapore after the fall of Melaka in 1511, see also Wheatley in Kwa and Borschberg, 2018, 80.

71 The testimonies have been reproduced in Pintado, 1993.

72 Borschberg, 2016, 23; Kwa, 2017; Borschberg, 2017, 41. Concerning ruins such as they were at the time of modern Singapore's founding in 1819, see Wheatley in Kwa and Borschberg, 2018, 74, esp. n14.

73 Liaw, 1976, 173; Pires, 1944, II, 265.

74 Wolters, 1970, 91, 125, 170.

bendahara, who acted in a function comparable to a prime minister. Together with the *temenggong,* the *laksamana* and the *shahbandar,* the *bendahara* was one of the four great lords, or merchant-officials, of Melaka. Other important ministers included the *bendahari* (treasurer) and the *hulubalang besar* (a type of defense chief) who customarily also held the title Sri Bija di Raja.[75]

The *bendahara* acted as master of ceremony, accepted official gifts from foreign dignitaries and emissaries and legitimized court activities through ritual. According to the Laws of Melaka, he was granted 'jurisdiction over those holding office, those who rank as *tuan* (lord) or *sida* (court officers)' as well as over the children of high-ranking noble-officials.[76]

The *temenggong* was the second of the four great officials of Melaka and is consequently also considered one of the principal merchant-officials. He was in charge of security, prisons, and customs, and participated in policy decisions in close consultation with the ruler and the *bendahara*. In addition, he investigated crimes and held jurisdiction over criminals. These functions have brought the office of *temenggong* into closer association with the present-day chief of police.[77]

As intimated earlier, the *laksamana* was an official whose power base was rooted in the office of the *hulubalang besar* and the title of the Sri Bija di Raja.[78] The latter was equivalent to the chief of defense and was a dignity that had been traditionally held by leading families from Singapore and Bintan. Unsurprisingly, the *laksamana* whose office was linked to defense, drew considerable support from the *orang laut* communities around Singapore and the Riau Islands.[79] The *orang laut* are known to have served the *laksamanas* of Melaka and later of Johor as rowers and they worked only for food.[80] According to the Laws of Melaka, the *laksamana* was the *raja laut,* the 'king of the sea'.[81] He commanded the royal fleet, and was responsible for diplomatic protocol and for receiving foreign embassies. He also exercised authority over foreign merchants in a range of responsibilities that seem to have overlapped somewhat with those of the *shahbandar*.

The fourth great Melaka merchant-official was the *shahbandar*, literally the 'king of the port'. His main function was to supervise foreign merchant

75 Muhammad Yusoff, 1992, 98, 218; Muhammad Yusoff in Kwa and Borschberg, 2018, 131–138.
76 Liaw, 1976, 62–63; Muhammad Yusoff, 1992, 128–134.
77 Pires, 1944, II, 264; Muhammad Yusoff, 1992, 218.
78 Borschberg, 2016, 24–25.
79 Muhammad Yusoff, 1992, 100.
80 Pires, 1944, II, 264; Sopher in Kwa and Borschberg, 2018, 164.
81 Muhammad Yusoff, 1992, 134–137, 218.

communities, act as an intermediary between these foreign merchants and a high-ranking official such as the *bendahara*, and in later times issued maritime passes.[82] The *shahbandar* was the custodian of the weights, measures, and coinage; he collected anchorage fees and dues; held powers of arbitration to settle disputes between foreign merchants, and moreover exercised jurisdiction in all matters involving foreign merchants, foreign vessels, orphans and those persons who had suffered injustice. The Laws of Melaka describe the position of the *shahbandar* as the 'father and mother of the foreign merchants'.[83] In practice the *shahbandar* acted as the agent of the ruler's maritime trading interests mentioned earlier. During the sultanate as well as later in some other Malay and Javanese port polities, the *shahbandar* often was not a native of the land, but a foreigner, and this office was also the highest rank and honor a foreigner could attain.[84] Given the *shahbandar's* duties to supervise and adjudicate disputes between foreign merchants, this made perfect sense, as he would have to be familiar with the customs and the languages of the foreign merchants whom he represented. The *shahbandar* was thus a powerful intermediary who enjoyed the trust of the foreign merchants as well as the confidence of the ruler and his principal ministers. In Malay polities *shahbandars* were installed to supervise ports located both along the coast as well as the banks of principal rivers.[85]

The Laws of Melaka are written in such a way as to suggest that there was, perhaps originally, only one *shahbandar*. The *Suma Oriental* of Tomé Pires, however, intimates that there were four *shahbandars* in Melaka in the period leading up to the Portuguese takeover of 1511.[86] Each of these *shahbandars* was responsible for merchants from distinct geographic regions: one for the Gujaratis; one jointly for the merchants from around the Bay of Bengal (the Coromandel Coast of India, Bengal, Pegu [Burma], and Pasai); one jointly for the merchants of the Malay and Philippine Archipelagos (Maluku, the Bandas, Palembang, Borneo, and the Philippines), and one jointly for traders originating from China and the Ryukyu Islands. The *Suma Oriental* also elaborates that, when a foreign merchant arrived at the port of Melaka, the *shahbandar* responsible for his business would intercede with the *bendahara* to obtain

82 Liaw, 1976, 138; Pires, 1944, II, 265; Muhammad Yusoff, 1992, 138; Meilink–Roelofsz, 1962, 42.

83 Liaw, 1976, 123.

84 Schrieke, 1955, II, 28.

85 For an account of the shahbandars, their varied responsibilities and their spread across the Indonesian archipelago, see Purnadi Purbatjaraka in Kwa and Borschberg, 2018, 354–65.

86 This observation has been repeated in several secondary studies.

permission for this newly-arrived merchant to conduct business. Obtaining such permission was conditional on the payment of taxes, as well as (when necessary) the presentation of gifts to the *bendahara*, the *temenggong* and the relevant *shahbandar,* the aggregate value of which was equivalent to about 1–2 percent of the cargo.[87] As a rule of thumb, merchants arriving from the west (India, Arabia, Persia) paid taxes of 6 percent, whereas merchants from the east (China, Ryukyu, Siam) were expected to offer gifts and sell a fixed portion (25 percent) of their cargo at a discount. The financial losses incurred through this mandatory discounting rule amounted to the equivalent of around 5 percent tax on the value of the entire cargo.[88] Together with the gifts presented to the merchant-officials, the combined payments and discounts were about equal to the 6 percent taxes that the merchants arriving from the west had to pay.

Anyone who has compared the relevant passages from the *Suma Oriental* with the Laws of Melaka will be struck by the almost complete absence of codified rules relating to the conduct of business. At a first glance it would appear that many of the customs may have been governed chiefly by *adat* (customary law). Malay rulers were very protective of their *adat,* an attitude that transpires not least from the tension between *adat* and Islamic law that emerges regularly in the Laws of Melaka.[89] As a rule, Malay rajas were defensive and resentful when foreign rulers (and later also the European colonial powers) interfered with their *adat.*[90] A successful envoy was one who grasped the different 'forms of governing of all the great rajas', a personal quality that has been ascribed to the Melaka *laksamana* Hang Tuah.[91] In the seventeenth-century Malay text *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, the ruler of Melaka is on record cautioning not to 'alter the *adat* that exist' among the subordinate rulers.[92]

Returning to commercial practices during the Melaka Sultanate, it is clear that *adat* must have played a role in governing business transactions, and that applied not only to the *adat* of Melaka, but also to the practices governing the merchant communities by each of its four *shahbandars.* It can be further assumed that merchants arriving from Muslim lands located to the west of Melaka were not in need of a separate set of laws to regulate their transactions,

87 Pires, 1944, II, 273–274.
88 Ibid., 272.
89 On the juxtaposition of punishments according to *adat* and Islamic law, see also Thomaz, 1990, 8.
90 Walker, 2004, 237.
91 Kassim Ahmat, 1968, 392.
92 Ibid., 411, 376.

because Islamic law would have been more than sufficient to serve that role. It may be argued that Islamic law acted as a predictable as well as transparent set of rules that governed commercial transactions, at least between the Muslim traders. Chinese rules and customs might have played a similar role with respect to traders arriving from the east. This helps explain why it was practical to install more than one *shahbandar* to represent different cultural groups, ethnic communities, and their respective business practices in Melaka.

Much ink has been spilt on the presence and influence of the different trading communities from west and eastern Asia: from Arabia, Persia, Gujarat, Coromandel Coast, Pegu (Burma), Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi, Borneo (Brunei), the coastal areas of present-day Vietnam, China, Taiwan and the Ryukyu Islands. In present-day Malaysia, the accentuation has been understandably on Melaka's role and status within the Islamic trading world spanning the Indian Ocean and insular Southeast Asia.[93] But this should not detract from the fact that Melaka's connections with China and Ryukyu were very significant since at least the early fifteenth century. China had shown great interest in Melaka as a source of marine and jungle produce, spices, as well as other imported goods from western Asia. Tony Reid has noted that Chinese merchants had joined the Zheng He voyages and these played a noteworthy role in the commercial rise of Melaka in the early fifteenth century.[94] Craig Lockhard claims that in the early 1400s the Chinese community at Melaka counted "a few hundred permanent and seasonal residents", some of whom may have been of mixed parentage and traced their familial roots to mariners of Zheng He's men.[95] Specifically, Patricia Risso has linked the rise of Chinese interest in Melaka and the Straits region as well as the establishment of a forward military base there in the 15th century to 'piracy'. This was rising in tandem with the political decline of the Majapahit empire. Melaka, Risso claims, became the "preferred Southeast Asian port for the Chinese", while Janet Abu-Lughod uncerscored that "Malacca aspired to become the new 'gateway' to China, the place at which merchants from all trading nations could meet but through which only a few could pass".[96] The commercial role of China, Taiwan and Ryukyu for the overseas trade with the Melaka Straits region from the 10th

93 Abu-Lughod, 1991; Risso, 1995, esp. 47–54. Also Reid, 1988; Ptak, 2007; Miksic, 2013, and Gipouloux, 2011.

94 Reid, 1980, 236.

95 Lockhard, 2010, 230. Concerning the Chinese diaspora see also Singh Sandhu, 1961; Chang, 1991.

96 Risso, 1995, 48; Abu-Lughod, 1991, 306. Concerning Melaka's foreign merchant communities in general, see also Thomaz, 2000b.

century A. D. onward has been addressed by Wang Gungwu, Derek Heng, Ng Chin Keong, Tony Reid and John Miksic among others.[97] Chinese views on the port of Melaka straddling the period of the sultanate and the early Portuguese period have also been collated and examined by Ptak.[98]

In recent decades authors have stressed the efforts made by the early European colonial powers to blend in and accommodate pre-existing business practices when and where feasible.[99] The spirit of accommodation is perhaps best exemplified in the continuation of many business practices by the Portuguese after the expulsion of the sultan from Melaka in 1511.

The key to unlocking the efforts to accommodate is to investigate and understand the agency of the local rulers and their peoples. Studies dating from the era of High Imperialism had committed the error of projecting period conditions deep into the pre-industrial era. This often resulted in a skewed view of conditions that over-emphasized European predominance and, in turn, conceded little agency to local rulers or peoples. This has posed a serious problem: histories generated during the one and a half centuries between 1800 and 1945 tended to emphasize European initiatives and juxtapose these to local responses.[100]

Melaka's Political and Social Values

Historians have sought to reconstruct Melaka society, and particularly to single out a set of core values that are not only found in works of Malay literature such as the *Sejarah Melayu* or the *Hikayat Hang Tuah,* but also in the aforementioned Laws of Melaka. The latter text offers a glimpse into several facets of Melaka society relating to the second half of the fifteenth century.

By using the prism of Melaka's laws and literature to examine key facets of its society during the period of the sultanate it is possible to tease out some conclusions. First, there seems to be an evident division between an urban mercantile and aristocratic élite versus a rural population that was economically tied to the capital city and primarily engaged in (subsistence) agriculture.

97 Wang, 2003; Heng, 2009; Ng, 2016; Miksic, 2013.

98 Ptak, 2004.

99 See for example Thomaz, 1991, 1994, 2000a.

100 The debates surrounding the agency of local rulers and their peoples, as well as their erasure in older histories have been summarised in a chapter by John Legge in the *Cambridge History of Southeast Asia.* There are, however, also other engagements with specific questions in the studies of Smail, 1961; Benda, 1962; Milner, 1987; and Heryanto 2007, 75–108.

Looking at society as a whole, one gains the impression of Melaka as a prosperous, if socially divided, society that, due to its wealth generated by trade, enjoyed a high degree of monetization of its economy. Punishments were expressed in units (specifically *taels* or *tahil*) of gold, and this raises the question to what extent the rural population was able to meet the monetary obligations imposed on them.[101] It would further appear that most aspects of life during the sultanate, both for the city dwellers as well as for the rural population, were governed chiefly by *adat,* a concept that has been already raised above. The significance accorded to *adat*, moreover, raises questions about the depth of Melaka's Islamization during second half of the fifteenth century.[102] These arise particularly with regard to punishments stipulated for certain sexual crimes like adultery and homosexuality, or also with reference to the treatment of women in general.[103] Juxtaposing punishments for crimes according to *adat* and Islamic law also reinforces the view that daily life must have been governed substantially by customary practices, arguably even in the heyday of the Melaka Sultanate.[104]

A scrutiny of Melaka's laws—both the *Undang-undang Melaka* as well as the *Undang-undang Laut Melaka*—yields a number of insights into the culture, values and political arrangements that governed day-to-day life during the sultanate. The laws stake out and reinforce societal divisions and impose hefty fines on anyone who challenged or breached them. The ruling élite carved out privileges for itself, such as in the wearing of the color yellow or the use of certain words or terminology. The Laws of Melaka and generally also Malay literature address the normative priorities for the élite and here two expressions stand out: *nama* and *adil.* The pursuit of *nama* (reputation) served to support the ruler's legitimacy. As Milner and Walker have argued, *nama* was not only essential to Malay kingship, but also to the ruler's subjects and spiritual afterlife.[105] The sultans emphasized people, and augmenting the number of subjects or followers through virtuous conduct enhanced both one's *nama* as well as rank within the hierarchy of rulers.

The ruler and his ministers were also expected to be *adil*, a word associated with a range of qualities such as being fair, circumspect, just, firm, and

101 Khasnor, 1997, 145.

102 *Ibid.*, 148. Testimonies survive by Muslims from western Asia that question the depth of Islamization at Melaka, famously the testimony of the Arab pilot Ibn Masjid from around 1480: "You don't know whether they are Muslim or not." Cited in Risso, 1995, 49.

103 *Ibid.,* passim; Borschberg, 2015, 503–504.

104 Khasnor, 1997, 132.

105 Walker, 2004, 213. Also Milner, 1982, 101, 104–111, 113; Milner, 2008, 66–67.

courteous.[106] In turn, Malay literature exhorts subjects to obedience and deference. Raising one's hand against a ruler—such as in an uprising or a coup d'état—has been portrayed an act of *derhaka* (treason), a very grave sin that not only threatened the social, but also the divine-cosmic order underpinning civil society. A raja-less polity was equivalent to a state of *huru hara* (chaos and confusion) without *adat*, traditions, justice, or *ma'mor* (prosperity, being populous).[107]

People and settlements—not land or even income derived from land—were main concerns of the rulers, and these priorities are echoed both in the Laws of Melaka as well as in the testimonies of early European visitors to the region. The Laws of Melaka attribute little value to land—in fact land was almost worthless on the Malay Peninsula, something early Dutch visitors in later times found difficult to grasp.[108] It appears that the buying, selling, pawning or mortgaging of land was either uncommon or not practiced. For example, one could mortgage a fruit orchard—the fruit-bearing trees themselves—but not the land on which they grew. If someone accidentally cultivated land that belonged to another, then the harvest had to be shared between the two parties. Moreover the distinction between *tanah hidup* and *tanah mati* (living land and dead land) is one of human activity taking place on the land: *tanah hidup* was land that was tilled, planted and cultivated by people; *tanah mati* was not dead strictly speaking—it could involve, for example, a piece of uncultivated forest.[109] As in later decades, the king is said to own all the land, and people could request a plot from him to use and live on. The travelogue recounting the visit of Admiral Matelieff to the Johor court in 1606 explained the situation thus: 'All the land belongs to the king [of Johor] and is hardly valued, so that whoever asks it of him can receive enough land.'[110]

In line with these attitudes toward land, the wealth of an individual was measured not by the money he owned, the size of his land, or even the income he could derive from it, but rather by the labour over which one could command.[111] In practice, this meant how many 'slaves' one had, always bearing in mind the term 'slave' was historically an elastic one in Southeast Asia that encompassed different degrees of personal bondage. Wealth was thus measured

106 Khasnor, 1997, 140–142.

107 Ahmad, 1968, 70, 307; Teeuw and Wyatt, 1970, 78, 131; Gullick, 1958, 44–45; Milner, 1982, 31–32, 94–95, 104, 109; Milner, 1995, 16–24.

108 Borschberg, 2016, 29.

109 Khasnor, 1997, 143; Borschberg, 2008, 42–44.

110 Borschberg, 2008, 109.

111 For the dynamics of labour, see also Milner, 2008, 57.

in terms of labour and people. This is not just mirrored in the Laws of Melaka, but also in the early European testimonies touching on Malay societies such as for example in the Philippine archipelago.[112]

The situation with the sea mirrors the situation on land. Melaka's maritime laws are not concerned with maritime dominium, fishing rights, or the freedom of navigation. Rather, they focus on order aboard the vessel, on crimes and emergency situations, on regulating transactions aboard a vessel at sea, as well as on salvaging goods from vessels that have been wrecked, stranded, or are helplessly adrift at sea.[113]

It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which Melaka's maritime laws envisioned the projection of the ruler's authority into maritime spaces. This raises questions about claims that the Melaka Sultanate—and Malay rulers during the precolonial period in general—implemented a policy of free navigation and trade. It cannot be claimed that Malay rulers generally pursued 'free navigation' broadly speaking, nor did they have 'a general concept of *mare liberum* and claimed a right for … ships not to be interfered with on the high sea'.[114] The origin of this position can be traced to Raja Ala'udin of Gowa (Sulawesi, Celebes) dating from the year 1615, who explained to officers of the Dutch East India Company: 'God made the land and the sea; … it is unheard that anyone should be forbidden to sail the seas. If you seek to do that, you will take the food from the mouths of my people.'[115] In fact, such a such an understanding of Ala'udin's statement as a clear reflection of an accepted practice of *mare liberum* clashes with the generally accepted position that Malay rulers habitually compelled passing ships to call and trade at their port(s). For sure, Malay rulers encouraged merchants to come to their shores to trade, and this was admittedly a hospitable practice pursued with an aim not of enriching oneself, but rather for sustaining the sultanate's redistributive economy and also for rulers to generate sufficient funds to meet their *belanja* (current expenses, outlays).[116] Moreover, anyone who has trawled the maritime laws of Melaka will find that these focus on discipline and lines of authority aboard ships, and eschew express mention of either maritime dominium, or indeed any freedom of trade and movement across maritime spaces.

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112 See esp. Scott, 1991. Generally also Brewster and Reid, 1983; Raben, 2008.

113 Winstedt and de Josselin de Jong, 1956; Liaw, 1976.

114 This position was notably advocated by Alexandrowicz, 1967, passim, and Anand, 1981, 446.

115 Stapel, 1922, 14; see also Wolters, 1982, 45; Kathirithamby-Wells and Villiers, 1990, 154. Concerning hospitality, see Wolters, 1982, 46.

116 It is said that the accumulation of money by the ruler serves no *guna* (purpose). Kassim, 1968, 68. Concerning *belanja*, see esp. Milner, 1982, 24–25; Milner, 1992, 25; Day, 2002.

As has been observed in earlier publications, Malay rajas—and this would also include the ruler of Melaka—were often the single largest merchants in their own polity. With reference to Melaka it was stated earlier that the sultan and his family disposed over a private merchant fleet of 150 vessels versus some 20 for the locally-based merchants. How accurate was this estimate? Writing admittedly about a later period, Milner observed that, while Malay rulers took an active interest in commerce and also actively participated in—just as the Melaka Sultan had—'the fact that they did not foster indigenous entrepreneurs is a theme in many reports …' of the colonial era.[117] Did this observation also hold true for the way Malay polities worked in much earlier times? What about Melaka specifically? How would an independent local trading middle class align with the ruler's dominant role in the trading and redistributive economy of the city and hinterlands? What do the crude number of ships owned by the sultan and the local shipowners inform? The debate continues.

Concluding Thoughts

Melaka was embedded in a patchwork or network of personal allegiances and trading networks that authors in the past have dubbed empire or thalassocracy. It was not a territorial empire defined in a European sense. Melaka's heyday lasted for a little over a century, from the early fifteenth to the first quarter of the sixteenth century. At the apex of its power Melaka commanded the loyalty of subjects on the peninsula, Sumatra, the Riau Archipelago and as far as Borneo. It must be remembered that as a consequence of the Portuguese conquest of Melaka in 1511 the sultan was only expelled from his capital city. The Melaka Empire understood in terms of a web of allegiance networks survived at least until the founding of the successor polities, Johor and Perak, by two sons of Melaka's last sultan around 1528.

Melaka's rise can be seen in terms of a confluence of factors and developments that included locational advantage, climate change, Chinese intervention, a strategic marriage to a Pasai princess, and Islamization. The latter three integrated Melaka into Muslim and separately also Chinese trading networks that spanned the region. The town had grown into an important emporium within just a few decades during the first half of the fifteenth century. A coup d'état in 1456, together with political and institutional reforms, laid the grounds for subsequent growth.

117 Milner, 2008, 72. Also 1982, 23.

By the early 1500s, Melaka was reportedly facing problems on several fronts.[118] The foreign merchants had already demanded a written set of laws to govern their transactions, perhaps as a response to the inadequacies of *adat* or the increasingly arbitrary behavior of the great merchant-officials. The *Malay Annals* are replete with messages about the dangers of disloyalty, decay, and the erratic decisions of its last ruler Mahmud. Eventually, tension arose between the sultan and his *bendahara* because of the latter's greed. European sources from the early sixteenth century attest: 'There is no foreigner or native who does not wish for his [the *bendahara's*] downfall because of his affronts and robberies. … to which they [the foreigners] are subjected every day'.[119] Today's reader of Araujo's letter gains the impression that Melaka had become a proverbial 'low-hanging fruit' ripe for the plucking.[120] Assessing the potential success of a future attack on the city, Araujo noted that,

> The Sultan of Melaka has no aid coming from inland, neither good nor bad. The Sultan of Pahang is his only friend and is getting one of his daughters married to his son. He [the Sultan of Pahang] is a weak sultan with a small population. By sea, the Sultan of Malacca has no ally to give him aid and he is at war with the King of Siam, who has a large land and many people, and many seaports … At sea the Sultan is also at war with the King of Aru, who is a Muslim, and this causes him great apprehension and fear. Now we have heard that the Sultan of Malacca is on bad terms with the King of Java, who will be coming against him with a large fleet within seven or eight months' time to take this port.[121]

In sum, sources of Malay and European origin attest that Sultan Mahmud liked his opium,[122] and his *bendahara* was corrupt and resented. Judging by the testimony of Varthema, the city had become a dangerous place for foreign merchants. Melaka, moreover, allegedly had many enemies but few allies. Even among the tributary rulers few were thought to be willing to rush to the sultan's assistance in the event of an attack, and rumors of such an attack by Java were making their rounds at the time. Anyone who read Araujo's letter would

118 Borschberg, 2015, 519–521.

119 Pintado, 1993, 132.

120 Borschberg, 2015, 521.

121 Pintado, 1993, 133. These appear to have been more than just rumors. Jepara attacked Portuguese Melaka in 1513.

122 Concerning Mahmud's opium consumption, see Pires, 1944, II, 254; mention is also made in the *Sejarah Melayu.*

have concluded that the time was now favorable to launch a military strike. His words did not fall on deaf ears. Alfonso de Albuquerque arrived with his fleet the following year, and the rest is history.

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CHAPTER 12

The Portuguese Maritime Empire: Global Nodes and Transnational Networks

Cátia Antunes

Immanuel Wallerstein's 1970s concept of world system explained colonial exchanges as solely exploitative. The center (Western Europe) controlled the periphery (colonies) through violence and exploited it by imposing a separation in labor regimes that resulted in Western European free specialized labor markets gaining competitive advantage over unfree (indentured and enslaved) unspecialized labor markets in Africa, the Americas and Asia.[1] This exclusively exploitative model failed to acknowledge the specificities related to maritime expansion and the nature of Early Modern maritime empires as explained by G.V. Scammel or James Tracy, for whom empire building was part of the natural tendency of Western European spaces to expand.[2] Since landed competition was part and parcel of the rise of fiscal military states, Western European powers took to the waters to effectively take advantage of resources worldwide.[3]

What both Wallerstein's model and Scammel and Tracy's work seem to neglect, however, is the agency and power of local societies in the construction, development and safeguarding of European maritime empires. They furthermore grossly neglect the political and institutional weaknesses of colonial empires, which often were unable to exert direct power or impose governance in the overstretched, distant and multicultural territories over which metropolitan European states claimed sovereignty.[4]

Although not sharing Wallerstein's Marxist interpretation of the world system or Scammel's and Tracy's more liberal approach to maritime empires, Jaime Cortesão and Luís de Albuquerque have stressed the power of the Portuguese Crown in the initiatives leading to the construction, development and maintenance of the Portuguese maritime empire, in a perspective that glorifies the strength of the state and its central and peripheral institutions, where

1 Wallerstein 2011.
2 Scammel 1981, Tracy 1991.
3 Glete 2002.
4 Herzog 2015.

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violence was central to the policies of conquest, imposition and organization of empire.[5]

Recent historiography of the Portuguese empire has however moved away from this interpretation. Four different historiographical schools plea for a more de-centralized and less Eurocentric approach to empire. The first school developed around the works of António Manuel Hespanha. For Hespanha, the Portuguese Early Modern state, like most Western European states at the time, was weak. Even if some individual kings might have been strong, state institutions were frail and fragmentary. However, these characteristics were not paramount for the relative efficiency of the Portuguese colonial institutions, since most were ran within a corporatist nexus, typical of Early Modern societies.[6]

Hespanha's proposal raises two questions. First, if institutions were weak, what were the forces, within or outside the state, that actually sustained the functioning of the empire. Second, if the institutions fell short in imposing the state's will upon the empire, why did the empire show such a remarkable resilience until the late twentieth century? The answers to these questions arise from three different historiographical perspectives.

The second line of though is represented by Francisco Bethencourt. For him, the central institutions of empire in Lisbon were unable to control the remote regions in Africa, South America and Asia that the Portuguese kings claimed as their domains. Bethencourt argues that the governance of empire was only possible because of the existence of peripheral institutions like brotherhoods (*misericórdias*), guilds (*confrarias*), urban municipalities (*municípios* and *senados da câmara*) and religious institutions (parishes, hospitals, orphanages, convent schools). Institutions like these, Bethencourt argues, played a pivotal role in the process of negotiation and mediation between the interest of the 'common good' (often interpreted by historians as the good of the state) and the interests of the local communities (mostly the elites). On the other hand, these peripheral institutions became instrumental in elevating the social status (and thus economic potential) of local elites and in so doing bringing these into the fold of the empire. These multiple processes of negotiation, mediation and integration resulted in a source of power, and thus domination that Bethencourt coined as 'nebulas of power'.[7]

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5 Albuquerque, 1985, Albuquerque 1994, Cortesão 1940a, Cortesão 1940b, Cortesão 1983, Cortesão 2007. More recently, Giuseppe Marcocci has argued for the centrality of the Portuguese maritime expansion as a national design built by- and for- the state: Marcocci 2011; 2012.

6 Hespanha 1994.

7 Bethencourt 2007.

Although important in the administrative and integrative processes of empire building, such 'nebulas of power' were not enough to hold the empire together or to let it function economically as a well-oiled machine. Amélia Polónia therefore argues that the Portuguese empire excelled in the integration of self-organized networks of merchants, whose economic interests came first and before the interests of the 'greater good' of empire.[8] These networks articulated commercial, shipping and financial circuits across four continents and three oceans, often stepping away from the restrictions imposed by the institutional rules of empire.[9] Illegal trade, contraband, tax evasion and parallel circuits to those defined by the metropolis, but beneficial to the local and global economies took precedence above the will and power of the empire.[10]

Self-organized networks were rooted in cooperation, rather than competition between European (both Portuguese and non-Portuguese), non-European merchants and creole business groups circulating beyond the borders and the sphere of the Portuguese maritime empire. Luis Filipe Thomaz emphasizes the influence and power of these local communities in the Indian Ocean, a historiographical perspective followed by Sanjay Subrahamanyam, while Luis Filipe Alencastre, Mariana Cândido and José Curto argue in similar terms for the experiences in the Atlantic.[11]

The emphasis placed by the above-mentioned authors on the self-organization of the Portuguese maritime empire in the East and the West challenges the traditional view that the choices of the Portuguese state determined the economic cycles of empire. For Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, Frédéric Mauro, A. R. Disney or A. J. R. Russell-Wood, the decision of the Portuguese kings to expand first to the East and then to the West, initiated economic cycles dominated by specific monopolized products like pepper from the Indian Ocean (until the beginning of the seventeenth century), replaced by sugar from Brazil (between the third quarter of the sixteenth and through the seventeenth century), succeeded by gold from Brazil (between the last decades of the seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century).[12]

8 Polónia 2015; Polónia and Owens, 2015.

9 Antunes 2012.

10 Antunes, Post and Salvado 2016.

11 Subrahmanyam and Thomaz 1991. Thomaz 1994. Curto and Soulodre-La France 2005. Alencastre 2007. Candido 2013.

12 To understand the theory of economic cycles of empire see: Godinho 1963. Mauro 1983. Russell-Wood 2008. Disney 2010. Schwartz 2007.

Creole communities were also part and parcel of the powerful cooperative self-organized networks that helped shape the Portuguese maritime empire. Their loyalties and identities have been subject of historiographical reflection as have been profusely discussed and conceptualized in the works by Toby Green and Gerhard Seibert (revisiting the idea of 'Luso-Africans' in Western Africa), by Stephan Halikowski-Smith (development of the idea of a 'Portuguese tribe' in Southeast Asia), by Leonard Andaya (idea of an 'informal empire' in the insular territories of Southeast Asia) or by Ângela Barreto Xavier (coining of the concept of 'imagined community' to the capital of *Estado da Índia*, Goa).[13]

These new approaches have led to a revisionist movement regarding the nature of the Portuguese Early Modern State, on the one hand, and of the Portuguese Empire, on the other hand. For Pedro Cardim, Tamar Herzog and Gaetano Sabatini, the Portuguese state, especially after the Union of the Crowns (1580–1640)[14] became part of a polycentric monarchy, composed of different kingdoms, principalities and empires.[15] According to the concept of polycentrism, the relationship between the different parts of the monarchy were negotiated, as were the delimitation of borders between the multiple jurisdictions that governed kingdoms and empires in a critical intake of the concept of composite monarchy and empire as proposed by John H. Elliot.[16] These principles of jurisdictional negotiation and thus local participation in empire building correspond to a more general Early Modern development in maritime empire building and masterly elucidated by Lauren Benton.[17]

Historiographical perspectives on the nature of empire have changed as much as the perspectives regarding the state. Characteristic of this change has been a move from a centralized, exploitative and coercive model of empire, to an interpretation of empire that highlights social, economic and cultural peripheral formations, where people, ideas, territories, information and capital circulated. Circulation is translated by the new historiographical currents as a sign of participation and thus integration into the fabric of empire, regardless

13 Xavier 2008. Halikowski-Smith 2010. Andaya 2010. Green 2012. Seibert 2012.

14 Union of the Crowns is the period in which the Portuguese kingdom and its empire were brought under the Habsburg domains and rule by the Spanish Habsburg kings in Madrid. Although the Portuguese kingdom was integrated in the Spanish state as one among other kingdoms, the Portuguese empire remained a domain of the Spanish king, but under a separate jurisdiction, maintaining thus, a separate status from the Spanish empire.

15 Cardim, Herzog and Sabatini 2012.

16 Elliot 1992, 52–53. Goffman and Stroop 2004.

17 Benton 2010. Benton and Ross 2013.

of individual provenance, ethnic origin or religious denomination. Regina Grafe and Alejandra Irigoin have described the participants of empire as stakeholders,[18] while George Winius has called it a shadow empire.[19]

This chapter claims by contrast that informal networks and local communities were not solely responsible for the formation of the Portuguese maritime empire. They acted as interactive partners with the institutions of the central and the peripheral state. The strength of the empire relied on the intersection of, on the one hand, European, non-European and local communities, and on the other hand, the places of encounter where this interactions took place, mostly port areas. It was from these ports, rather than from Lisbon, that empire emanated and was governed. This link between entrepreneurial/commercial networks and nodal gateways took shape as much in the Atlantic as in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and became the norm for the building, development and maintenance of empire. Though the cases that follow portray the case of the Portuguese empire, similar arguments and phenomena can be found for all maritime empires, since ports and commercial networks were the true building stones of maritime empires.

Global Nodes and Transnational Networks

The intersection of ports and transnational merchant networks within the Portuguese sphere of influence in the Atlantic took multiple forms and examples abound. For this chapter, I focus on two of those examples, São João de Ajudá (commonly known as Ouidah, in nowadays Benin) and Benguela (in nowadays Angola), since they represent two different ways in which imperial, international, regional and local circuits of trade were articulated separately but objectively influencing the outcome of global exchanges, and thus the layout of the Portuguese empire.

The Portuguese had been in São João de Ajudá since the beginning of the sixteenth century, although only on a permanent basis since the 1570s. Logistics and trade in enslaved Africans took place within a context of creolization of the region that accelerated after the development of the Cape Verde Archipelago, in what Toby Green as named a 'creolization of the Atlantic and the slave trade'.[20] The region was used for the bartering of European low value goods for water and provisions for the ships exploring the Western African

18 Grafe and Irigoin 2012.
19 Winius 1983.
20 Green 2011.

coast until the construction of the fort that was to become the exporting center for enslaved Africans into the trans-Atlantic slaving circuits. The region was thus relatively important for the logistics of empire, but negligible for state and private trade until the third quarter of the sixteenth century.[21]

It was only during the seventeenth century, and the arrival of Dutch competition, that the Portuguese empire took a vested interest in the area. Like the Portuguese, the Dutch initially came to the region in search of logistic support for the fleets of the Dutch West India Company (WIC), but soon started to see Ouidah as a suitable port for slave embarkation, although this function remained unimportant when compared to other embarkation ports along the Western African coast.[22] The rapid expansion of the English and the French, though, transformed Ouidah and surrounding areas into an important market for slave trade and the port became a relatively important gateway for the embarkation of slaves on ships bound for the Americas. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, Ouidah played a pivotal role in the trans-ethnic network of slave traders operating in the hinterland and became a place of encounter for European and American slave traders transporting people to the South American, Caribbean and North American slave markets.[23]

The success of Ouidah as a gateway for the transatlantic slave trade can be dated to the beginning of the eighteenth century. This dating corresponds to a period in which the diversification and intensification of transatlantic slave trade took place because of the rapid increase of the plantation complex in the New World and the subsequent success of cash crops, like sugar, tobacco and coffee, in the European markets.[24] Ouidah became one of the many bolts moving the logics of transcontinental 'commodity' chains that ensured change and in that respect similar to many other gateways in the Western African Coast. Ouidah was, contrary to some of its counterparts, a place where empire (as a state controlled enterprise) lost its meaning.

Ouidah was an unsophisticated market place where local traders exchanged their human cargos for European and American products. This market place was organized around the different lodges (or forts) of the European colonial powers, with the Dutch, the English and the French being the most notorious during the eighteenth century. This very short description of Ouidah and its activities already entails the subversion of concepts of power and exploitation contained in traditional historiographical accounts of European domination.

21 Mendes 2005.

22 Heijer 1997. Silva 2011. Silva 2014.

23 Law 2005.

24 David Eltis *et al* and their work regarding the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database.

Local communities were the link to the multi-state and cross-cultural hinterland that supplied local markets with slaves who were to be sold in the trans-Atlantic economic system. The buyers were Europeans (of different origins) that regardless of monopolistic, exclusivist and mercantilist policies devised in European metropoles, used the mediation of the Europeans on the coast (usually settled within forts and lodges that were claimed as property of different European chartered companies and private firms) to access the Ouidah slave market. But the Europeans were not alone in this endeavor. Also merchants living in the Americas used the middle ground that was Ouidah to circumvent European mercantilist laws and acquire the needed slaves without weighing in the laws and rules of empire.

The best example of the involvement of merchants from the Americas in the Ouidah trade is the case of the 'Brazilian' traders. These men departed from the ports of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro to acquire slaves in Ouidah (and other markets in Western Africa, as I will show below). They bought their human cargoes from different European suppliers, although there was a clear preference for the British and the French.[25] The slaves were bartered for alcoholic beverages (mostly *cachaça*),[26] tobacco, and less frequently for weapons, and transported to the Brazilian slave markets. Individual slaves were then sold into the plantation complex (mostly for the production of sugar and tobacco for the European and African markets) and for the mining sector (exploitation of gold and, and by mid-eighteenth century also diamonds).[27]

What is remarkable in the 'Brazilian' operations in Ouidah is that non-European subjects of the Portuguese king were acquiring a much needed labor force from subjects of other competing European empires in a form of trade that can be considered illegal. When returning to Brazil, a significant part of the disembarked slaves were not registered with the royal authorities and thus tax evasion was part and parcel of these exchanges. Perhaps still more detrimental for empire was the direct export of 'Brazilian' products to barter for slaves. If *cachaça* was not an exclusive product and could thus be freely traded, tobacco was not. Tobacco was a royal prerogative and subject to the adjudication of a colonial contract to a contractor (*contratador*). This contractor operated from Lisbon and was responsible for the commercialization of the different types of

25 Law 1997. For the French cross-cultural participation see Heijmans, 2019.

26 Cachaça is the Brazilian alcoholic beverage prepared from the sugar cane and in all similar to rum.

27 Florentino 1995. Curto 2002. Lopes 2007. Lopes and Menz 2008.

tobacco from Brazil into Portugal, for the transformation and product placement in the domestic market and for the right to tax farm tobacco transactions in both sides of the Atlantic. The direct exports from Brazil to Ouidah were thus a serious infringement of the law and prerogatives of empire.[28] In short, the 'Brazilian' trading ventures in Ouidah show case how illegality, smuggling and tax evasion were part and parcel of empire, perhaps in detriment of the income of the Portuguese Crown, but for the profit and success of the empire.[29]

The direct exports of Brazilian tobacco to Ouidah to be bartered for slaves are a serious subversion of the logic of empire imposed by Lisbon in what it conceived of a triangular trade between Africa, Brazil and Portugal. But this trade carried still another serious challenge to the essence of the Portuguese empire. The re-export of tobacco from Lisbon to foreign (European) markets was highly regulated in order to favor the state and its tax farmers. It is therefore interesting to see that only part of the 'Brazilian' tobacco exported to Ouidah actually remained there for consumption in the African markets. As happened also in the Dutch Elmina trading center, the tobacco of best quality was re-exported to French, Dutch and English ports, thus evading taxation and Portuguese regulation, and simultaneously breaking the mercantilist rules and laws of privilege in those same ports. With the knowledge and support of the Portuguese governor in Brazil, Portuguese military and maritime personnel, 'Brazilian' traders could rest if not on official support, at least, on institutional toleration. All in all, 'Brazilian' traders were in the business of participating, integrating and subverting the Portuguese empire and in the process helping the development of Ouidah as a major gateway for African and American commodities into the global consumption markets.

Ouidah was, however, not a unique case within the orbit of the Portuguese empire in the Atlantic. Around the turn of the eighteenth century, 'Brazilian' traders were, again, transforming the essence of a Portuguese empire ruled and controlled by the metropolis. Experienced in bartering 'Brazilian' commodities (mostly alcoholic beverages) for slaves in the African markets, they were able first to supplement this offer with Asian textiles and later on even replace it completely in certain markets.[30] A good example is the case of Benguela in the

28 Salvado 2014. Lugar 1977. Hanson 1982. Verger 1966. Verger 1968.

29 For a similar example regarding the trade in brazilwood, see: Antunes, Post and Salvado 2016.

30 Bartering textiles for slaves was by then a century old practice in which all Europeans with access to European or Asian textiles participated. However, the 'Brazilians' were the first to do it massively and changing the terms of trade in the Western African markets, especially South of the Congo River: Miller 1988, 501. Machado 2014, 158.

south of Angola, a port that during the eighteenth century saw its importance increase in the transatlantic slave trade and quickly replace Luanda (Angola) as port of embarkation for enslaved Africans destined to the American markets. As in Ouidah, local communities were paramount in linking the port to the hinterland while Bahian and Rio de Janeiro traders were essential to connect the local and Brazilian markets.

The bartering of slaves in Benguela was apparently legal because it was ignited within the sphere of the Portuguese empire. The means for the exchange, namely the Asian textiles, however, were illegally imported from Goa, the capital of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*, into Brazil and from there into Africa. The boldness of the 'Brazilians' extended still to textile imports from Dutch and English controlled ports in the Coromandel coast in a clear break of colonial exclusivism and cross-imperial exchanges at the margins of empire. This commodity chain challenged the political and economic separation between Atlantic and Indian Ocean circuits and placed a claim on a transoceanic, cross-imperial and multi-systemic development that the Portuguese empire was far from capable to integrate. In practice, these exchanges challenged the sovereignty of the Portuguese Crown, the *Estado da* Índia and the governorships of Brazil and Angola in a clear disrespect for royal prerogatives, monopolies, exclusives and differentiated regimes of taxation. So, if the textile trade from Goa and the Coromandel coast to Angola, via Brazil, subverted the laws of state and empire, it actually integrated three commercial circuits across three different continents and two different oceans. Oblivious of geographical, jurisdictional or communal borders, the 'Brazilian' subjects of the Portuguese empire were in the forefront of changing a state driven enterprise into a stakeholder endeavor, where the empire held power, gains and socio-economic advancement, without having a say in the organization of such exchanges.[31]

Goa: 'Shadow Empire' in the Bay of Bengal

The 'Brazilian' slave traders were not unique in the context of the Portuguese empire. Portuguese communities in Bengal (India) were also keen on alternative mechanisms of participation in empire. The Portuguese presence in Bengal was tenuous at best. However, Portuguese speaking communities settled in the southeastern Bengali coast in order to participated in the slave raiding activities organized jointly with the Arakanese traders (subjects of the Arakan

31 Alencastro 2007.

state in present-day Burma).[32] As in Ouidah, Tamluk (Tambolim in Portuguese), Hughli, Balasore and Pipli became gateways for the raiding fleets looking for logistic support and quickly turned into market places for the bartering of slaves for local commodities, in a nexus that escaped the control or even the interest, of the Portuguese empire in the East. The Viceroy in Goa was less than interested in exchanges he could not control and doubts were raised as to the loyalties and Christian identities of these communities.[33]

The result of the participation of the Portuguese communities in the Bengal-Burma slave raiding and trading was a strong contribution to what George Winius has called the 'shadow empire' of Goa in the Bay of Bengal.[34] Like the 'Brazilians', the 'Portuguese Arakanese/Bengali' saw themselves (and were seen by others) as subjects of the Portuguese empire, although Goa exerted little to no control over their actions and it is questionable how much gain the *Estado da Índia* attained by this trade. Locally, however, the Portuguese slave raiding communities excelled in the articulation of local gateways into staple market places for slave trade and in so doing participated in a trade that broke the borders of the local economy and the borders of the Portuguese empire.

The transformations of the Portuguese communities in Asia were not reduced to slave raiding activities and already after the establishment of the English factories, Portuguese traders remained pivotal in the way gateways linked hinterlands to regional and intercontinental circuits. In spite of imperial and colonial rivalries, differences in religious and cultural affiliation with the European newcomers and the local populations, the Portuguese in the Coromandel remained economic and social players well after the twilight of the Portuguese imperial presence in the area.[35]

The Indian sub-continent and Southeast Asia were plagued by the presence of Portuguese traders and communities even after Asian and European empires took a route to conquest and expansion. The steady-fastness of these communities, as with the 'Brazilian' traders in the Atlantic, was the pivotal role they played in the articulation of local, regional and global markets, via gateways that were considered neutral grounds for exchanges between cross-cultural networks, on the one hand, and for the interloping of imperial systems that disregarded the interests and logic of local subjects. Western African, Bengali Arakanese and Coromandel ports were catalysts for the developments of an informal empire that cannot nominally be separated from the formal

32 Charney 1998. Pearson 2007. Campos 1979.
33 Subrahmanyam 1990, 223. Mukherjee 2016.
34 Winius 1983.
35 Subrahmanyan 1985. Seshan 2012. Seshan 2017.

Portuguese empire, but that followed its own logics and needs and pursued its own interests.

The Case of Macau

Even if the examples abound, perhaps the most emblematic case within the Portuguese sphere remains the case of Macau. Charles Boxer and George Brian Souza are arguably the historians that have better described, understood and explained the intricacies of the city of Macau, given to the Portuguese by the Chinese imperial authorities as a place where Chinese and foreigners alike could trade without impinging upon the rules of the Chinese empire.[36] In practice, Macau was seen as a 'free' port/city by the *Estado da Índia* and the few institutions that were able to settle in the territory were reduced to the municipal senate and the charitable and educational institutions linked to the Catholic Church and the different religious orders.[37]

Macau prospered by mediating the closed trade between Japan and China by exchanging Chinese silk for Japanese silver. Merchants, skippers and crews operating this trade were often Sino-Japanese-Portuguese and their activities were as fluid as their religious affiliations and their identities.[38] The *Estado da Índia* and the Chinese emperor had little to say about these operations and it is unclear, when, how and how much taxation was actually attained from these exchanges.

Subservient to the Sino-Japanese trade, Macau also served as a distribution center for the products arriving from the Southeast China Sea, mostly via the islands of Timor, Solor and the Sultanate of Makassar. The insular trade, although less important in value and volume, was nonetheless essential for the Portuguese communities roaming the Straits (of Makassar and the Moluccas), as well as throughout the Banda Islands.

Macau's preeminence seemed threatened by the Portuguese expulsion from Japan, since merchants arriving from the Portuguese sphere were not allowed to enter Japan or trade with its subjects. This restriction became an opportunity to fuel a network of illegal trade that extended from China, to Korea, Japan and Manila. Even if Manila fell officially under the Spanish empire, Chinese, European and American creole elites living in the city were keen on acquiring Chinese silk and porcelain. This trade prospered because the Manila

36 Boxer 1942, 16–17. Boxer 1968, 114–121. Boxer 1969, 275–297. Souza 1986.
37 Vale 1997. Olé Rodriguez 2002. Shechan 2008, 135–146.
38 Van Dyke 2005, 144.

merchants were able to exchange these goods for illegally acquired silver from the Manila Galleon that crossed from the Western Spanish American coast, through the Pacific, into the Philippines. Notwithstanding the restrictions on the circulation of American silver outside of the Spanish royally controlled galleon, exchanges still took place, thus allowing the merchants of Macau to quickly replace the income they generated from the Sino-Japanese trade.[39]

The boldness of the Macau-Japan and Macau-Manila operations was a thorn in the eyes of Portuguese, Spanish and even Japanese officials. These exchanges broke the traditional exploitation within the logic of oceans by linking the Indian Ocean/South China Sea to the Pacific, incorporating Manila both within the American and the Asian systems. Furthermore, it constantly broke the jurisdictional borders imposed by the separation of the Portuguese and the Spanish empires, jurisdictions that were not only economic, but also religious (a very significant row broke out between the Portuguese *Padroado* and the Spanish religious orders for the religious control of Manila and Macau).[40] But perhaps more astoundingly, Macau remained a free port city with a nominal connection to the *Estado da Índia*, but far from being part of the institutional apparatus of empire. As the 'Brazilian' communities trading in Benguela, the Macanese merchant class was fluid, entrepreneurial and nominally part of the Portuguese empire, although empire was as much an abstraction in Asia, as it was in Europe.

Conclusion

Maritime empires are usually perceived as warmongering machines, expanding to exotic and uncontrollable regions, where exploitation and violence are two sides of the same coin. Even if this holds true for the phase of conquest of empire, it is impossible to conceive of powerful maritime empires without the integration of its subjects, or nominal subjects. That integration was not a linear process, but it took place from bottom up, as much as empire building took place from top down. Perhaps the most successful mechanism of inclusion in empire is the act of individual and communal participation in the opportunities provided by empire building. Many of these opportunities were paramount for the prosperity of communities and the wealth of particular individuals.

39 Flynn and Giraldez 1996, 58–60. Figueiredo 2000. Souza 2005.

40 Souza 2006.

Curiously enough, communal and individual participation in empire was not always perceived by the colonial institutions as a positive affair, since it often included taking the rules and laws of empire lightly by participation in illegal trade, linking economic and religious jurisdictions that should otherwise remain separate and pushing local economies into regional and ultimately global systems of exchange. This defiance of empire was, in fact, an effective, profitable, although fluid mechanism of empire building and social integration.

Social integration took place as self-organized communal networks, often led by cunning and experienced individuals, were able to connect local markets, to regional, international and intercontinental exchanges. As agents of an Early Modern form of globalization, these networks excelled because they were able to partake in the physical and institutional protection of specific gateways. These gateways, often maritime ports, were essential in the articulation of markets, networks and processes of participation, and thus integration, in empire. Bethencourt's institutional 'nebulas of power' were happily used by Polónia's self-organized networks, whose interests were negotiated and deployed through a system of gateways where cross-culturalism was of the essence. For the empire, this was possibly the most effective way of remaining whole and functioning, while for the communities involved, a sense of shared belonging and multiple loyalties developed into Winius' 'shadow empires' and Halikowski-Smith's 'Portuguese tribes'. Together, around different oceans, but sharing a world view, they were the informal empire that justified the existence of the formal empire.

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CHAPTER 13

The Asian Foundations of the Dutch Thalassocracy: Creative Absorption and the Company Empire in Asia

Remco Raben

For a short period, Dutch maritime power carried the day. From the 1620s to the 1650s, Dutch ships seemed to wield the greatest power on the global seas. Not without effort, Dutch commanders succeeded in establishing footholds in many key areas in Asia, Africa and the Americas.[1] The expansion was not centrally directed by the government of the Dutch Republic, but by the various stakeholders in the overseas enterprises. Their unconcerted effort – and the relative weakness of opponents in this period – resulted in an impressive maritime network. Indeed, Dutch tentacles reached far and wide.

In recent years there has been discussion about the nature of early modern Dutch expansion, and whether it deserves to be characterized as 'empire'.[2] What was the defining role of the monopolistic Dutch trading companies: that of merchant or king, company or state? This question goes beyond semantics. The general tendency has been to qualify the coercive character and the territorial ambitions of Dutch early modern colonialism, even to the extent to brand it "expansion without empire", and to characterize the Dutch as "reluctant imperialists" – which has become a kind of topos in the historiography of early modern Dutch expansion.[3] Although recently the political, state-like features of VOC rule have received more attention, the predominant perspective on the Dutch companies in the Atlantic and in Asia remains that of trading organizations. Hardly without exception, historians first and foremost emphasize commercial rationales, shipping patterns and trading routes – with or without emphasizing the role of coercion.[4]

1 This period of Dutch ascendency was, tellingly, branded "the Dutch moment" by Klooster 2016.

2 The classic account of a Dutch 'empire' is, of course, Boxer 1988, but his discussion of the imperial character is not very detailed.

3 Emmer and Klooster 1999, 48–69; Gaastra 1991, 37; Greig 1987; De Jong 1998, 45.

4 An interesting, pertinent approach is adopted by Antunes and Gommans 2015, who stress the networked character of the empire and especially its linkages to other networks, but do not discuss its imperial features.

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This chapter will concentrate on the Dutch East India Company and evaluate its modes of operation within the framework of empire studies. By looking at the VOC from the perspective of empires, and in particular maritime empires, we may be able to better understand its dynamics and solve the paradox of the Company's persona as both a commercial undertaking and a sovereign "state". It will also help us to foreground the Asian sources of Company rule. This is done by highlighting three specific 'imperial' features of the VOC in Asia: that of its power structures, its methods of extraction, and manners of staffing and labour mobilization. By addressing these themes, two things will become clear: in the first place, that the Company has always blended the roles of both merchant and territorial ruler: extractive and exploitative strategies were part and parcel of the commercial enterprise the Company purportedly was. Secondly, it is striking how much the VOC empire relied on and absorbed local practices. This process of accommodation or creative absorption is typical for most empires, as for reasons of scale they have to creatively integrate standing practices in order to be able to rule efficiently and extract wealth from the countries under domination. The result was an organization with a fundamentally hybrid structure, drawing from both metropolitan inspirations and local practices – and developing new colonial policies of its own.

Network, State, Empire, Thalassocracy

Over the past twenty years, the growing interest in empires has resulted in a wave of publications on specific empires and on comparative imperialism. Although conceptualizations of empires would seem unstable – in particular in the premodern period distinctions between empires and other kinds of polities are not clear-cut – historians have demonstrated a surprising consensus about the basic features of empires.[5] Most historians agree that empires are geographically extensive polities, with most of the territory won by violent conquest. War was a permanent feature of empires, both as a means of expansion and of integration. Moreover, empires develop a very diverse administrative structure. Various methods and instruments of rule are applied in different corners of the empire. Empires also contain diverse cultural spheres and enclose a variety of cultures and peoples, who have different rights and

5 Howe 2002; Münkler 2005; Barkey 2008; Burbank and Cooper 2010; Bang and Kołodziejczyk 2012, 11–12.

obligations within the empire. Finally, empires have a networked character. They are organized in what often has been called a hub-and-spoke structure.[6] There is a strong centre and the dependencies are primarily connected to this pivot rather than laterally with each other. All kinds of things and people flow around in the empire or rather, are funnelled through the centre to other parts of the empire.

Although centred around a 'hub', the structure of empire was not simply imposed by the centre. Karen Barkey points at the continuous negotiation necessary for defining the degree of autonomy of the parts of the empire and the level of fiscal and military levies. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, for their part, stress the existence of imperial repertoires, modes of operation that are above all pragmatic and accommodating. Thus, empires develop a patchwork of organisational mechanisms. These negotiating and accommodating features point at a crucial facet of empires: their capacity to absorb local systems of rule, taxation, rituals, legitimation and institutions of commercial exchange and manpower recruitment. This absorptive and improvising nature of empires is often neglected by scholars but it is crucial for our understanding of the functionality of diversity within the empire.

Within the new imperiology, some have pointed at the peculiar character of maritime empires or thalassocracies.[7] As Rolf Strootman indicated in the introduction, maritime empires are less disposed to conquer vast territories, but concentrate on dominating maritime connections, harbours and coastal regions. Moreover, the watery connections enable quick communications and a swift transfer of armies over long distances. Thalassocracies usually also have a strong commercial component, for the simple reason that most of the thalassic empires grow out of trade activities and seek their maintenance in forms of trade. Thirdly, being mainly about trade, maritime empires tend to develop different rationales and reflexes from extended land empires. For instance, when trade lapses, imperial retreat can be considered. This does not often happen on a voluntary basis, but it is essential that unprofitable settlements can be more easily abandoned, as the empire does not consist of extensive, adjoining areas. Issues of sovereignty are also complicated, as there are many forms of 'imperial' presence, ranging from formal possession to overlordship, enclave and semi-autonomous settlement. Maritime empires also foster different forms of mobility and migration and colonization. And finally, maritime empires have the fascinating quirk that they allow other, sometimes competing networks to

6 Motyl 2001; also see the "Introduction" to this volume.

7 See e.g. Abulafia 2014.

operate within its sphere of influence. Although sea power can be exclusive, it often is not.

Real empires do not always neatly fit our academic typologies. Peter Fibiger Bang and Chris Bayly made a strict distinction between what they called tributary land-empires, and commercial and colonial empires. Tributary empires, they argue, "were all based on the conquest of wide agrarian domains and the taxation of peasant surplus production".[8] It would appear from this that trade empires had a different rationale, used different means of control and tapped into different sources for survival. It may be instructive to see on what account so-called commercial empires really operated in different ways. Was there really something like a purely commercial empire? Did maritime empires shirk 'tributary' functions? And how does mastery of a sea work? What does it do to the autonomy of the different parts of the empire?

The Dutch East India Company indeed sits uneasily among the ranks of the large, territorial, tributary empires. This is also reflected in the terminologies used to describe the VOC polity. In Dutch, the word empire is rarely used in reference to the VOC. This is more current in other languages, but even then, most emphasis goes to the commercial fundaments of the VOC, referring to it as a merchant empire or an empire of trade.[9] Tellingly, Jane Burbank and Fred Cooper in their recent survey of world empires devote one chapter to the early modern trade empires, and it is the only chapter without the word empire in its title: "Oceanic economies and colonial societies". In their hands, empire has become an economy. In their view, the overseas venture consisted of "militarized entrepots at key points in commercial networks".[10] They describe the settlements as "precarious endeavours" and "enclaves" – and thus with limited territorial ambitions. They have good reasons to do so, but thereby veil the preponderant imperial mechanisms of the East India companies.

Burbank and Cooper's approach reflect the general tendency to view the VOC world as a business network that is primarily propelled by commercial motivations. Elsewhere too, Dutch "imperial" endeavours, when acknowledged, are qualified as "reluctant", "limited", or tempered by commercial or rational considerations – vide the "precarious endeavours" by Burbank and Cooper. Derek Linton, for instance, called the Dutch empire a "limited thalassocracy" – the limitation meaning the reluctance to engage in territorial conquest.[11] Again we encounter this typical characterization of early modern

8 Bang and Bayly 2011, 6.
9 Tracy 1990; Furber 1976.
10 Burbank and Cooper 2010, 149, 156.
11 Linton 2015, 64.

colonialism as one that is fundamentally trade-oriented, and therefore apparently not fully fledged. It is proto-empire at best. This links up to a more general conceptualization of pre-1750 colonialism in Asia: the Age of Partnership, a term coined by Holden Furber in 1969. Furber argued that in the early modern period European powers were not yet dominant and had to rely on cooperation with Asian rulers and traders in order to achieve their goals. Only in the later eighteenth century did the balance gradually shift to the Europeans and would Asia enter the Age of Empire.[12] The words "limited" and "partnership" allow us to conceive of a relatively benign sort of empire-building, not primarily bent on violent conquest and basically driven by commercial motives. This way of viewing opened the way to invoke the VOC primarily as an example of early modern innovative institutionalization, business rationality, calculating restraint – the world's "first multinational company".

The growing interest in the operation of empires, but also the recent scholarly emphasis on violence has changed our focus on the trading companies. Sanjay Subrahmanyam argued in 2003 that Company actions were marked by the fact "that there was an ever-present violence – whether acted out or potential – whenever the Dutch Company appeared on the scene".[13] This idea of the VOC as a coercion-wielding organisation that was constantly at war and permanently exuded threats of violence, is corroborated by Gerrit Knaap, who calculated that the VOC was, year in year out, engaged in warfare at several places in its empire simultaneously, sometimes even ten or more.[14] The Company was a war machine, an institution that was unremittingly primed to fight and was organized around violence and coercion for the upkeep of the empire and to obtain the commodities for the European markets. In 1691, Knaap calculated, the Company employed 12,000 soldiers and armed sailors in Asia, increasing to 20,000 in 1750 – excluding the additional troops of Asian soldiers and sailors.[15]

What seemed a commercial company in Europe, operated as a state in Asia. Many years ago, Jur van Goor already argued how much the Company relied on political domination. He characterized the Company as "an early imperialist and hegemonic power".[16] The VOC not only had sovereign rights in Asia, but also operated like a state. Knaap concluded that overseas "the VOC was more a state than an enterprise". Evidently, he did not deny that revenues were coming primarily from trade; rather, he argued that the Company activities in Asia "for

12 Furber 1969.
13 Subrahmanyam 2003, 6.
14 Knaap 2014, 16.
15 *Ibid.*, 17; Lequin 2005.
16 Van Goor 2004, 25; 2002, 24–25.

a very large part" had a political-military nature.[17] The VOC in Asia, it implies, was a Company-state, in the words of Edmund Burke "a state in the disguise of a merchant".[18]

However, both interpretations – the VOC as a trade system and the VOC as a state – have its flaws. After all, the VOC was not just a state and it was not merely an economic system or trade network. To conclude that it had a hybrid character is also not really helpful, as it conceals several fundamental traits, institutional and operational, such as its sources of inspiration, its extractive mechanisms and its management of people, that do not easily find their logic in its constitution as company or state. At issue is more than merely a matter of definition. The unresolved dilemma of king versus merchant urges us to consider the nature and mechanisms of VOC rule in Asia.

Repertoires of Domination

The persistent notion of Dutch East India Company as primarily a commercial body was conceived in the Dutch Republic and has determined later views on the Company. Company directors themselves never defined the VOC sphere as "empire". Pieter van Dam's bulky survey of the Company's history and structure, dating from 1701, has not a single reference to the VOC system as an "empire" or "state", nor does he use any other term for a territorial polity. This reflected not only his own belief in the commercial foundations and interests of the Company, but also the usage prevailing in the Republic.

Company directors tried painstakingly to avoid any explicit reference to "empire" or imperialism, resulting in a sanitized image of the Company as a business operation. Empire, Arthur Weststeijn noted, was associated with Spanish tyranny and the risks of imperial corruption and attrition. Dutch ventures, by contrast, were enveloped in a language of Republicanism and free trade: the mercantile character of the undertaking would safeguard the Dutch Republic from imperial decline.[19] Day-to-day perceptions of Dutch overseas ventures were more ambiguous, however: they were not solely referred to in commercial terminologies, but also in terms of power, conquest and domination.[20] The conquest of Brazil from 1624 onwards, for instance, elated the public in the Republic as a political victory, and magistrates reacted by announcing holidays

17 Knaap 2014, 15, 23.
18 Stern 2011, 3.
19 Weststeijn 2012.
20 Weststeijn 2014.

to celebrate the conquest.[21] Although public rhetoric, carefully guided by the Company directors, emphasized anti-Spanish (and anti-Portuguese) elements and promises of wealth, the triumphant atmosphere had markedly political overtones.

The ambiguity of free trade versus dominion could be seen in public discourse, in Company parlance, but also in the legal foundations of Dutch operations in global waters. Hugo Grotius provided a legal basis for Dutch operations across the globe – his treatise *Mare liberum* (The freedom of the seas), originally part of a larger work *De Indis* (On the Indies, written around 1604 but published only much later with the title *De iure praedae*), was published separately in 1609 to show that international waters should be accessible to everyone. But *De Indis* was also meant to provide legitimation of a "corporate sovereign" – the Company – waging war in Asian waters.[22] Originating in the Eighty Years War, the legal and political underpinnings of the East India Company were heavy with the rhetoric of conquest and domination, and associations with Iberian and Roman empires were plenty. It was clear that the Dutch conceived their maritime and overseas efforts in a clear genealogy of empire-making, although with a strong ideological overtone of market efficiency and Republicanism. Indeed, to prove the intentions of the States-General in establishing the Dutch East India Company in 1602, the most famous clause in the VOC charter concerns the Company's right to maintain an army, build forts and conclude treaties in the area assigned by the charter – east of Cape of Good Hope.

The coercive character also transpired in the way commercial profits should be guaranteed. From the outset, even before the VOC was formed, Dutch merchant warriors tried to establish a monopoly on the most precious commodities, beginning with the cloves from the Moluccas. Through exclusive treaties, the Dutch sought to gain the sole right to purchase and transport the valuable spice.[23] Once 'trade' was interpreted as 'monopoly', domination became part of the core repertoire – even if there continued to be a marked reticence to undertake all-out conquest, especially among directors in the Republic. Monopoly was impossible without the employment of high levels of violence and a good measure of territorial control. Territorial conquest and subjection became part and parcel of the Company strategy, first in the Moluccas, later also elsewhere. Political control was one of the main instruments to ensure the

21 Van Groesen 2017, 51.
22 Wilson 2008, 356.
23 Knaap 2004. 19–21.

production and delivery of the most important trade commodities. Sovereignty thus became a crucial part of the actions of the VOC in Asia.[24]

The dichotomy of trade versus empire was a paradox, spawned by the exceptionalist discourse in a Republic bent on doing things differently from the Iberian empires, conscious of its own limitations as a small power, forestalling imperial decline, and foregrounding commercial interests of the Republic as a raison d'être for the overseas ventures. In actual fact, trade and profit considerations made the Company to use the instruments of empire and to engage itself in territorial expansion. This evolved directly from the commercial impulses. The VOC empire was built around trading opportunities, markets and production areas; conquest and submission were essential pillars of this venture.

The imperial initiative came to lie primarily with the central and local authorities within the empire. The leadership in Asia had much less qualms to talk about issues of power, territory and sovereignty than the Directors in the Republic. Most illustrative, and probably most instrumental in the establishment of trade monopolies was the fourth Governor-General, Jan Pieterszoon Coen, who forcefully pegged out the Company interests in the Central Moluccas and on the Banda islands to concentrate the production of spices, establish Company control over the areas and ensure Company monopoly over its trade.[25] But it did not stop with Coen, nor was he necessarily the staunchest imperialist of VOC Asia. There was, in the middle decades of the seventeenth century, an imperial 'moment' in Dutch colonialism, when the conquests in Brazil and in Asia the annexation of large parts of the Portuguese possessions produced administrators with a markedly territorial-imperial outlook. This led to an expansionist zeal that is clearly visible among several prominent conquerors and administrators such as governors-general Antonio van Diemen, Rijcklof van Goens and Cornelis Speelman, but was inherent in the dynamics of the Company empire at that point in time.[26] This 'imperial moment' also translated into recurrent debates to send Dutch colonists to Asia in order to staff the empire and thus embark on a policy of real colonization.[27] Although short-lived, and withdrawn on the argument that colonists would put Company monopolies at risk, it made clear that there was an overseas empire to

24 Koekkoek, Richard, Weststeijn 2017, 86–87.

25 Arasaratnam 1973.

26 Van Goor n.d., 81; for the expansionist phase during the 1630s and 1640s, see Witteveen 2011.

27 Raben 1996, 150–153.

migrate to, and that territorial control and land-based exploitation was an intrinsic part of Company power.

Apart from monopolization, there were other impulses working towards territorial expansion. At various moments in time, the Company developed a marked hunger for territory, as happened in the last round of assaults on the Portuguese empire in the 1640s and 1650s. During the War of the Spanish Succession, the Company even considered the attack and conquest of the Spanish Philippines, a plan that was considered both for its commercial and political possibilities.[28] And several governors of Ceylon dreamed of, and even tried, to conquer the central highlands of the island, home to the independent kingdom of Kandy, an ambition that served no commercial goal.[29]

The greatest annexations occurred in Java, where they started later, took longer and ironically had no clear commercial purpose.[30] It was triggered by the almost permanent instability of the Mataram kingdom in Central Java. From the late 1670s to 1755, the VOC was almost permanently at war in Java, resulting in full sovereignty over the northern part, and suzerainty over the divided kingdoms in the centre. It completely changed the relationship of the VOC to the people and the land. During the First Javanese War of Succession (1704–1708), Governor-General Joan van Hoorn embarked on a policy of exploitation and extraction involving a system of controlled production of cash crops which, in the words of Luc Nagtegaal, "meant a radical about-turn of the Company's commercial policy".[31]

As if there could be any mistake about the methods and aims of the Company, there is little doubt that Asian powers generally viewed the Company as a power bent on domination. What remained a strictly commercial undertaking in the Dutch markets, operated in Asia by means of force, annexation, territorial control and exploitation. The result of conquest was an empire of great variety, ranging from trading posts in foreign cities, to forts on sovereign soil and large-scale territorial possessions. In 6 of the 23 administrative units of the empire, the Company had extensive sovereign rights: around Batavia, Java's Northeast Coast, Banda, Ambon, Ceylon and Cape of Good Hope.[32] Elsewhere, the legal position could range from trading offices on foreign soil to forms of suzerainty. Even if the Company's administrative structure was seemingly

28 'Speculatien over de Philippinse Eijlanden', National Archives, The Hague, Archive families Van Hoorn and Van Riebeeck (code 1.10.45), inv.nr. 42.

29 Nierstrasz 2012, Chapter 3.

30 Ricklefs 1993.

31 Nagtegaal 1996, 84.

32 Knaap 2014, 18.

homogeneous, with a strict hierarchy that was replicated in every individual station, this was only one part of the administrative structure, which obscures the fact that when it came to territorial rule, the structure of government was the result of local accommodation and cooperation.

The awareness that European imperial rule depended on local patterns, is hardly new. In his seminal article "The non-European foundations of European imperialism", the British historian of empire Ronald Robinson argued that European empires heavily depended on the collaboration of local rulers and elites in order to maintain dominance and control.[33] This collaboration thesis has been embraced by scholars of imperialism, and indeed it applies to all empires. In the VOC empire too, patterns of indirect rule, the use of local social hierarchies such as the caste system in Ceylon and India and the labour obligations in parts of the Indonesian archipelago point at similar processes of local collaborations.

But the process of negotiation and absorption by imperial powers goes beyond the cooperation of local elites. We can see how the thalassic empire of the VOC depended not only on local collaborating rulers but adopted and absorbed a great variety of Asian institutions and repertoires of governance and extraction. It was this adaptive quality that made the VOC into an Asian power. Authority was in many ways negotiated, but the methods of coercion, obligation and extraction were grafted upon pre-existing practices. As a result, methods of control and extraction were extremely diverse across the empire.

Extraction

Every empire has to live off the income generated by its conquered territories. The VOC was not an exception. Despite its image as a primarily commercial organisation, it is striking how much the VOC relied on taxation and other forms of extraction for its revenues. In the first place, it is often difficult to make a distinction between trade and more coercive forms of extraction. Many of the products destined for dispatch to European markets were acquired by means of obligation or coercion. More surprisingly perhaps, a large part of the Company's locally derived income – the earnings in Asia, not the profits made on commodities sold on European markets – were generated by other means than by trade. The Company thus relied on force and territorial methods of

33 Robinson 1972.

extraction. By so doing, it adopted pre-existing patterns of taxation, which were gradually amended to benefit the Company's interests.

Very little research has been done into the ways local Company authorities developed their policies for generating income. In accordance with this multitude of extractive methods, the Company displayed an astounding array of forms of taxation in money, goods and labour, many of which were based on pre-existing forms of obligation. Most polities in Asia used forms of taxation, in money and in kind. In many places, trade, both in port towns and sometimes also along inland rivers and markets, was taxed through import and export duties, port charges and tolls.[34] In littoral kingdoms, trade and levies on transport were a main source of income of the court. In land empires, taxes were often levied in kind, extracting a rice surplus from the peasants and using it to trade it for weapons and other foreign goods.[35] In many places, subjects had to perform labour duties to the lord or local authorities, although migrant (trading) communities were often exempted from labour duties and paid a poll tax. The practice of tax farming was also widespread.

It seems that local Company authorities had quite some leeway to arrange its methods of taxation. The general aim of the Company directors in the Republic and the Governor-General and Council in Batavia was to make the Company operation in Asia pay for its own expenses. This was called the cover ratio. In order to balance the costs, the stations in the empire had to maximize their revenues, and in many cases, they did fairly well. In most of the years, the cover ratio fluctuated between 80 and 120%. A large, expensive colony such as Ceylon achieved a cover percentage of about 95% on average between the years 1700–1760, with incidental peaks of 150%. Unfortunately, exact figures are impossible to get, due to the changing money values the Company used in its accounts, but the overall ratio was usually just below breaking even.[36]

The accumulation of revenues could be done by engaging in local trade, or by taxation or other revenues from the land. The local establishments made a distinction between "trade profits" and "country revenues".[37] Perhaps surprisingly, the latter became increasingly important in the course of the two centuries. Between 1760 and 1780, almost half of the Company revenues were made up of taxes; in 1640 this had only been ten per cent.[38] The extractive qualities of the Company are not systematically studied, but for the few stations for

34 For Java, Soemersaid 2002, 120–121.
35 Reid 1993, 215–217.
36 Van den Belt 2008, 89–93, 140–145.
37 *Ibid*., 92.
38 Van Goor 2004, 90; De Korte 1983, 47.

which we have information, we can see how much "country revenues" contributed to the balance. Extraction came in many forms: as taxes, as forced deliveries, as labour duties or as tithes. In most places, the Company imposed a combination of methods. The extent, the hybridity as well as the diversity of extraction methods are typically imperial features and demonstrate how much the Company depended on forms of territorial control.

In the case of Ceylon, the Company saw itself as having legal rights of possession, on the basis of the conquests of the territories on the Portuguese and the treaties with the kings of the Sinhalese kingdom of Kandy.[39] It operated as if it had the same rights as the kings previously had. The Company thus inherited a very elaborate system of taxation and obligatory labour service from caste communities. The most lucrative trade items were acquired through these obligatory services: elephants and cinnamon were delivered to the Company on the basis of communal service to the lord. The issue of sovereignty was therefore crucial: as sovereign of the lowland areas of Ceylon, the Company possessed the right to demand labour services.[40] Labour duties and tax burdens were not unchangeable. Under Company rule the labour tasks of certain caste groups did change, as did their status. For example, the caste group of the Salagama, from which cinnamon peelers were recruited, were burdened with increasing demands to provide the valuable cinnamon bark to the Company. For local revenue, the Company relied on regional trade, but also from taxation, tithes and tax farming. The relative – and absolute – weight of the "country revenues" in Ceylon was remarkable: it increased to 80% towards the end of Company rule.[41]

A similar trend was visible in the other extensive territorial conquest of the Company, the Northeast Coast of Java. There, with the treaties in 1705, 1743 and 1755, the Company acquired extensive legal rights. The harbour duties were the highest source of income for the Company, followed by (obligatory) deliveries of rice, timber and beans, which were requisitioned through mediation of local regents (*bupati*).[42] By the 1743 treaty, the Company appropriated the rights of the former Mataram kingdom, which included poll taxes and revenue farming. The responsibility of collecting the head tax also rested with the regents. The tax collection at the toll gates and markets – an important source of income to the Mataram elite – was farmed out to Chinese businessmen.[43] The

39 See e.g. Schreuder 1946, 5.
40 Arasaratnam 1978, 85–86.
41 Van den Belt 2008, 134; Schrikker 2007, 73–74.
42 Jacobs 2000, 184.
43 Knaap 1996, 139–146.

tax arrangements were so varied and complicated, that the Company had the greatest difficulty in finding out the details of each farm. In the course of time, they added tax farms of their own.[44]

Tax farming became standard practice in many establishments. In Makassar, for instance, where the Company could not generate enough profits from its own trade, probably because of impoverishment of the population after the conquest, taxation became an important source of income. The Company generated revenues from farming out spirit licences, taxes on gambling, slaughter taxes, market superintendent and port dues. In the course of the eighteenth century, the Company augmented these revenues by collecting tithes on the rice harvest. The Company sold the rice in Makassar to Asian and European merchants.[45]

In places where taxation came in the form of labour, as for instance in the weakly monetized Moluccas, the VOC defined the obligations of the people in terms of forced deliveries or labour duties. In Ambon, the VOC creatively adopted pre-existing forms of labour obligation in the coastal communities, which had developed in the fifteenth or sixteenth century as one of the manifestations of budding state formation.[46] This entailed, among other things, the provision and manning of the *kora*, paddled outrigger canoes used to patrol the Moluccan islands to show the Company's presence, guard the clove monopoly and combat smuggling. On top of this, the Company prescribed the delivery of cloves against fixed prices for shipment to Europe.

This is only a quick round of a few disparate Company establishments. It is evident that the Company empire ran for a large part on locally generated non-trade revenues. Unmistakably, a shift towards territorial revenues occurred during the eighteenth century. Losing its predominance in the intra-Asian trade, the Company looked for other sources of income.[47] Almost all stations for which we have data or qualitative information about taxation and other dues, we see an increasing array of taxes, forced deliveries and tax farms. The Company was very successful in tapping sources other than trade in order to cover the operational costs of occupation and the dispatch of commodities for the markets in Europe. The largest part of the local revenues came from 'territorial' sources. On top of that, most of the transactions that are usually framed as trade, were in reality based on obligation.

44 Kwee 2006, 76–96.
45 Jacobs 2000, 33.
46 Knaap, 2004, chapter 7.
47 Jacobs 2000, 17.

Circulating Manpower

A last example of creative absorption concerns the schemes of manning the empire. Empires are about labour, about mobilizing and securing manpower. Imperial history is therefore always also a history of global and globalizing labour. No empire exists without an extensive body of helpers from the societies it controls, and no empire can survive without the systematic employment – often by force – of indigenous peoples. Maritime empires are no exception. Perhaps even more than land empires, there was a limit in the capability to send large armies overseas, so that the imperial power has to rely on local men.

In the case of the VOC, most literature focuses on the dispatch of European personnel to man the VOC empires or on the issue of the global division of labour under the influence of rising early modern capitalism. In both cases, the role of imperial structures is soft-pedalled. Now the numbers of European men employed by the Company and sent to Asia are indeed impressive. During the almost two hundred years of its existence, about one million people were shipped from Europe to Asia in order to man the ships, the forts and the offices of the Company.[48] At its apex in the mid-eighteenth century, the Company employed more than 20,000 men in its Asian divisions.

But the dispatch of European personnel is only a part of the story. In many different ways, the Company has captured, employed and moved around countless Asian men and women to cater for the Company's interests or that of its elites. Here the maritime character of the VOC was instrumental. Its command over long-distance shipping enabled the Company to move groups of Asians – and incidentally others – over large distances.

Only fairly recently it has become clear how important Asian manpower was for maintaining the Company empire. Manning the empire from the Netherlands was extremely expensive, because of the costs of transport. Death rates among European newcomers in the Indies were appallingly high, especially after the 1720s. From the very start, Company authorities had looked for ways to employ or force Asian labour in various qualities, but it only started to take massive forms later in the seventeenth and especially in the eighteenth century. Asians appeared in many different roles in the empire, most often in subservient positions as sailors, soldiers and enslaved. They were present in the heart of the Company's operation and were indispensable to the running of the empire.

48 Bruijn, Gaastra, Schöffer 1987, 143.

In the first place we encounter Asians as sailors. Although the majority of the people manning the Company's ships continued to be recruited in Europe, an increasing number of Asian men were employed, especially on intra-Asian connections. This fleet was most of the time much larger than the fleets operating on the connections to Europe.[49] Manning this Asian network often necessitated the recruitment of Asian sailors. In the annual registrations of Company personnel, they are only haphazardly mentioned; only fairly recently, we have gained some insight into their existence. It appears that already fairly early in the Company's history Chinese sailors were employed on the routes to East Asia. With the expansion of shipping to the coasts around the Bay of Bengal in the 1640s and 1650s, Bengal sailors were increasingly hired to man the ships.[50] But the recruitment of Asian personnel on a large scale only started in the 1670s, with Bengal as one of the major recruiting areas. In the course of the eighteenth century, when Bengal was lost to the VOC as a recruiting area, Java became the principal recruitment ground for Asian sailors, who were either Javanese or Chinese.

As far as can be ascertained, usually about 10–30% of the sailors on the intra-Asian network were Asians, with total numbers ranging between a few hundred to a thousand. The balance tipped in the last decades of the eighteenth century, when European personnel were increasingly hard to come by. In the late 1780s as many as two thousand sailors were Chinese, Javanese or Indian, against about one thousand Europeans.[51]

Asia-born people were also manning the Company offices. With a total personnel of more than 20,000 in the eighteenth century, and with many newcomers succumbing to malaria and other diseases, the Company soon started to make use of the growing community of locally born children of Company employees.[52] Since the inception of Dutch rule in Asia, European men had procreated with Asian women. Their offspring, at least in the lower classes, received a basic schooling, after which they were recruited for the offices and sometimes as sailors. When their number swelled, a racial division of labour emerged in the offices. Most of the mestizo men remained in the lower rungs of administration, although not a few managed to climb to the higher echelons; in high ranks, white men from Europe remained predominant.

In the course of time the administrative personnel of the VOC consisted for up to 80% of Europeans of mixed parentage, especially in the smaller

49 Van Rossum 2014, 65.
50 *Ibid.*, 98–103.
51 Dillo 1992, 105 and 162; Van Rossum 2014, 105.
52 Lequin 2005, 237; on death: Van der Brug 1994.

stations.[53] Batavia was an exception, where most of the time only a minority of the clerks were locally born. Even there, though, in the late eighteenth century the percentage of locally born clerks increased to some 60%. The fundamentally Eurasian character of the Company offices around Asia reveals how 'white' we make European colonialism. The (male) newcomer dominates the story. The result is a colour blindness that has been haunting the narratives of Dutch colonialism.

It is the enslaved people who formed the greatest part of the labour force in the VOC settlements. They formed the backbone of the Dutch East India. The numbers of enslaved owned by the Company itself are hard to assess, as they were not registered in the Company administration. Their numbers varied from time to time and from place to place, and only incidentally we encounter them among other 'material' in the ledgers of the Company stations – not in the personnel registers. After all, they represented an amount of money of their purchase and were therefore, strange but true, ranked as 'capital'.[54]

The Company itself has been very active in slave trading and stimulating the traffic in slaves. As has become known over the last twenty years, at least 300,000 enslaved people were transported to Batavia alone. For all VOC establishment this would amount to perhaps half a million of enslaved people in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; some even suggest much higher figures.[55] Only a small part – but still tens of thousands of enslaved – were transported by the Company proper. The large majority of enslaved people were bought from private traders on the slave markets.

We see enslaved men and women appear in almost every conceivable role, as plantation labourers, as harbour workers, craftsmen, cleaners, builders, sailors, but above all as domestic workers. The widespread use of slavery under the Company indicates how much the Company accommodated to local patterns, as slavery was a common phenomenon in the region. There were differences though: in the first place, Company slavery revolutionized local patterns of enslavement and trade. By tapping into the slave trade networks, they channelled almost all available enslaved people to their settlements and in all likelihood greatly dynamized slave raiding in the archipelago. Kings in the region started to complain in the late seventeenth century that they had difficulties finding slaves for their own purposes.[56]

53 Bosma and Raben 2007, 39.

54 There is a growing body of literature on slavery and slave trade in the VOC settlements: Vink 2003; Raben 2008; Van Welie 2008; Van Rossum 2015.

55 Van Rossum 2015, 26.

56 Raben 2008, 133; Andaya 1993, 97.

It was not very surprising that the Company made good use of the reservoirs available in Asia. Still, it took many years until the Company secured itself of a steady flow of labour from enslaved people. It demonstrated its geographic scope by trying to draw from sources in all corners of its maritime orbit, from Japan, where it recruited mercenary soldiers, to the coasts of eastern Africa, where it bought up enslaved people. In the seventeenth century the Company recurrently tried to fetch the enslaved people themselves, in Madagascar, along the Indian coast and in Burma, but many died and the trade proved unprofitable. In the course of the seventeenth century and with demand from the growing Company establishments stepping up, the Company left most of the supply to private traders and secured slave networks closer to Batavia.

The big change came when Makassar, a slave trade hub, was conquered in 1668. From that very year onward, we see the annual number of enslaved imported in Batavia increase from a few hundred to almost 1,600 in 1671. In the next century, imports into Batavia would rise to a 1779 high of about 4,000. By that time, sources of enslaved people had diversified, including many from the eastern archipelago, especially Timorese, central Sulawesi and the northern seas.[57]

All in all, there were between 15,000 up to 40,000 enslaved at a single moment in Batavia in the eighteenth century. Elsewhere numbers were lower, but in most Company towns they made up almost half of the population. The second largest concentration of enslaved people was in the Cape of Good Hope, where numbers increased up to 25,000 in the late eighteenth century. Most were bought and employed by private owners. In all, cautious calculations result in a number of more than a half million enslaved people who have been brought to Company establishments around the Indian Ocean.

The last category of Asian pillars of the VOC empire is that of the soldiers. In the success story the VOC has become, very little attention is given to the fact how cumbersome and violent the establishment and maintenance of the empire was. The VOC aimed at profit but rested on violence. As an organization, it was deeply militarized, and it organized its violence in a typical imperial way: it used the ethnic and cultural diversity within its empire as a tool to control the different parts. Indeed, the VOC was almost permanently at war. This means that every year, with very few exceptions, the Company was engaged in one or several wars and was constantly preparing expeditions to the different corners of its Asian empire. It should be clear that the military superiority of the VOC was relative, and primarily at sea. On land it did not

57 Raben 2008, 127 and 131.

have the clear technological and strategic advantages it had in ship technology and armament. Armies were small, often not more than several thousand men. One could lay siege with them, but not fight a big territorial war. As a result, the Company depended on auxiliary troops, either by asking assistance from allies or by mobilizing them itself.

Three stages can be distinguished in the employment of Asian soldiers.[58] In the very beginning, the Company occasionally employed small numbers of mercenaries, especially Japanese and enslaved people, but generally relied upon its European soldiers.[59] Only later, when the slave trade had taken off, the Company started to use larger numbers manumitted (Christian) enslaved people, who, in contrast to the European soldiers, were recruited for one expedition at a time. These so-called 'Mardijkers' were extremely important in the large conquests of the 1640s and 1650s, which established the supremacy of the Dutch Company over other, especially Portuguese contenders in Asian waters and on Asian coasts. During the attack on Melaka in 1641 and the first Javanese expedition in 1678, Mardijkers and about six thousand Bugis (from Sulawesi) formed a crucial addition to the European troops.[60]

The conquests of the mid-seventeenth century boosted the need for more soldiers and triggered the emergence of a reservoir of soldiers and auxiliaries from which the Company could mobilize its armies. Defeated enemies or allies from territories that had been conquered came to Batavia and settled around the city. In the course of several decades, groups from the Moluccas, South Sulawesi and elsewhere came to Batavia, selling themselves to fight the wars for the Company in return for protection, pay and booty. From this time date the quarters, around the walled inner city, where Asian auxiliaries were accommodated in – formally at least – separate wards. Batavia developed into a trading town surrounded by satellite communities of soldiers.[61] These mercenary colonies gradually multiplied through the manumitted slaves who established themselves in the quarters and villages around the city. The normal procedure would be that the Company announced community leaders that an expedition was at hand, whereupon these mobilized the soldiers in their respective wards and delivered them to the government. Soldiers were sent to any war theatre around Asia. The VOC adopted military habits of Southeast Asia – to use the shifting allegiance of war bands and employ defeated soldiers in its own armies – but, as in the case of slavery, systematized and revolutionized

58 Much of this section draws on Raben 2002.
59 De Iongh 1950, 61–62; Iwao 1970.
60 Andaya 1981, 218–223.
61 Raben 2000.

it, thanks to its organizational clout and geographic scope. After expeditions, Asian mercenary regiments were disbanded and the soldiers returned to their communities.

The system came under pressure in the mid-eighteenth century. In the 1740s and 1750s, the VOC was drawn into extensive wars in Kerala, Java and Ceylon, demanding greater numbers of Asian soldiers to be enlisted. New sources of recruits were tapped, such as in the island of Madura, off Java, and on the Indian subcontinent. Especially many Indian soldiers (*sipahis*) became available during and after the Seven Years war (1756–1763), which had sparked an intensive mobilization of local soldiers by the French and later the British. This created a military labour market on the subcontinent, which the VOC was only too eager to tap into.[62]

The provenance of the soldiers but also the recruitment and training methods changed. In the later part of the eighteenth century, Asian soldiers were trained by Dutch or European officers, were donned uniforms, received fire arms and were trained to use them. This was applied for the first time in the long war against the kingdom of Kandy in Central Ceylon in the early 1760s. Only slowly, groups of Asian soldiers developed into a quasi-professional military community, geared to gradually take over the regular tasks of the Company soldiers. This happened above all in Malabar and Ceylon. As a result, the Company could keep most of the newly sent soldiers from Europe in their garrison in Batavia (where they died of malaria). But innovations were introduced only slowly, and the basic duality in the Company armies between European and Asian regiments was continued to the end of the nineteenth century.[63]

We have been dealing above all with people with their feet on the ground. The weight of the VOC's maritime character is perhaps not too clear, but it *is* there. Behind all these Asian men and women working for the empire, is the Company's maritime network. Thanks to its shipping circuit, it could efficiently shift people around within the empire according to its needs. It did so with its European personnel, but even more so with enslaved people, sailors and soldiers. We find Makassarese from Sulawesi in Ceylon and Malabar cavalry in Java. There were Balinese enslaved people in South Africa and Indian Tamils in Batavia. In that sense, recent scholars have justly argued, the VOC created an Indian Ocean world in which – next to other networks – the Dutch maritime system engendered its own dynamics of movement and interaction.[64]

62 Kolff 1990.
63 De Moor 1987.
64 Worden 2007.

The Company thus used its political and military power and the geographic expanse of its empire to the full in order to mobilize labour. It used the availability of local systems of coercion and recruitment to avail itself of manpower. This contrasted with practices in early modern western Europe, where the labour market did most of the work. This was not only, as Immanuel Wallerstein would have it, a matter of a world system that made use of forms of forced labour at its peripheries, but the systems of control and labour mobilization were made possible by the imperial structures of domination and extraction of the VOC.[65]

Conclusion

Much of the discussion on the character of the VOC world has operated on the opposition between trade and power, but this is in many ways a false opposition, as one could not do without the other. To say that the VOC in Asia was primarily a commercial venture, is missing an essential point about the Dutch early modern presence in Asia. It was not; not in the method of procurement of the bulk of its commodities and certainly not in the upkeep of its empire. As in any empire, the essence of empire was extraction. Most of it came in the form of forced or semi-forced and in many cases monopolized procurement of trade commodities. For this extraction, the VOC fell back on practices and patterns of local rulers and trading networks.

These practices of extraction and mobilization – Burbank and Cooper would say repertoires – constitute the Asian character of the Company empire, which therefore can be conceived as a form of imperial blending and creative absorption. The VOC could be so successful because of its adaptive qualities. In many ways, it absorbed the features of local societies and polities, resulting in a great diversity of exploitative strategies, ranging from slave labour (Banda) to forced deliveries (Ambon), the integration of local labour obligations (Ceylon) and the forceful channelling of commodity streams through patrolling and licensing. Apart from that, various forms of taxation – in kind, through direct taxes, and by tax farming – became increasingly important as a source of revenue. Indeed, wherever the Company considered itself lord of the land by conquest or contract, it imposed taxes. The combination of trade and coercion was strongly flavoured by practices of local polities and pre-existing systems of labour and control.

65 Wallerstein 1974, 91; Van Zanden 1991, 75–94.

The VOC empire was a thalassocracy, in that its watery connections determined the character of the empire and were essential to its upkeep. Maritime connections and shipment formed the backbone of the VOC empire and explains much of its dynamism and coherence. Sea lanes are fairly easy to travel. The Dutch empire in Asia was extremely successful in maintaining the connections between the hub in Batavia with the various 'spokes' around Asia. The Dutch learned that the empire could only be run smoothly and safely by maintaining regular connections, changing the guards frequently, and by strict protocols of accountability. In landed empires of such extension, this was much harder. Bureaucratic uniformity and degrees of accountability were enhanced by the maritime character of the empire. As in most maritime empires, trade was an essential ingredient. It provided the impetus for establishing an empire, it provided legitimation, and it was instrumental in the upkeep of the empire. But trade and the employment of force and violence were closely connected, or even more accurate, trade and coercion blended. The Dutch maritime empire could be so successful because of its ability in running an efficient shipping system that enabled it to move people around. This greatly enhanced the control from the centre and the unity of the empire.

Does it matter whether we call the VOC web a trading network, a state, a maritime empire, or a limited thalassocracy? Does the issue go beyond the convenience of nomenclature or semantics? It does. By discussing terminologies and investigating the nature of the endeavour, we have been able to counterbalance the emphasis on the Company as a primarily commercial enterprise. The VOC empire developed methods of coercion and domination that were deeply rooted in its maritime character and that are highly characteristic of complex imperial systems. The VOC world was nothing less than a maritime empire, not a closed territorial system, but a network of connections and nodes along and between which enormous amounts of goods, people and instruments of power moved around. In this, the VOC was paramount to other maritime empires in Asia. But this was only one face of empire. The other side was constituted by the regional mechanisms of control and extraction that operated beyond the façade of the Company hierarchies and which were rooted in local protocols of rule and taxation.

In the above, some salient aspects of the Dutch East India Company have been analysed through the lens of maritime empires. Turning our viewpoint, what does the example of the Dutch East India Company tell us about maritime empires? The most pertinent observation would be that although maritime empires operate by means of naval power, it never does so alone. Maritime empires were always hybrid empires, not purely naval, but not exclusively dependent on their territorial possessions either. Watery connections formed

the bone structure of the empire. But although trade and shipping are essential parts of their rationale and are elementary for the upkeep of the empires, most of the money was made on land, and it is there that the Company power demonstrated its permanence.

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CHAPTER 14

Pirate Networks in the Caribbean

Kris Lane

Pirates today spin webs in cyberspace. A man calling himself Dread Pirate Roberts exploited a complex but open electronic infrastructure to create an online clearinghouse he called The Silk Road. For two years he profited from this virtual fencing empire using a laptop computer and public library WIFI. This self-styled internet pirate ignored national boundaries as well as international laws. Indeed, finding effective laws under which to try and convict him proved difficult. Had he not been living in the United States, 'Dread Pirate Roberts' – a fence rather than a raider – might never have been caught.

This chapter argues that the pirates of the early modern era, when sea raiding first went global, were similarly opportunistic. In the vast and mostly lawless Caribbean, they were quick to spot the vulnerabilities of an inchoate and highly competitive trading system that blended private and state projects. Like modern transnational criminal operations, early pirate networks rose and fell cyclically, responding to persecution and suppression campaigns with similar 'balloon' effects – disappearing here only to pop up there. Only sustained judicial (and extrajudicial) efforts finally rendered these networks untenable. Initially tolerated and sometimes promoted as freelance agents of emerging states or rising princes, in the end pirates were hunted down and eliminated like vermin.

Until recently, most scholarly attention has focused on the pirates themselves rather than on their landlubber helpers, much less their victims.[1] Yet high seas raiding, to be profitable if not entirely sustainable, required reliable places to trade loot and refit, or simply to cash in – what one historian has dubbed 'pirate nests.'[2] Thus, networks of rendezvous points, multi-ethnic merchant enclaves, even temporary 'pirate republics' appeared and vanished as maritime predation grew more sophisticated. This chapter aims to trace these broad patterns of rise and decline in the early modern Caribbean context, and also to compare their peculiar features.

1 Examples include Rediker 2004; Apestegui 2002. A thorough prosopography is Marley 2010.
2 Hanna 2015.

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The Caribbean Sea, menaced by Carib waterborne raiders before 1492, witnessed the slow rise and quick decline of bona fide pirate networks from the sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries. As will be argued in this chapter, widespread freelance or unsponsored piracy peaked only in the second half of the seventeenth century, but it was not long after this that interstitial or transnational pirate networks were either torn apart or formalized. Freelance pirates or 'buccaneers' came under joint fire beginning in the 1670s, but the tide only turned when Europe's growing merchant empires declared a universal 'war on pirates' around 1700, delayed somewhat by the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713). After this only brief spurts of piracy occurred in wartime or amid anticolonial struggles. The pirates of the Caribbean, famous even in their own day, faded to legend, to be recycled in popular culture.

Pirates, Corsairs, and Privateers

Before going further, we must distinguish piracy from state-sponsored raiding in this era. Few who robbed at sea wished to be called pirates, yet the lawless expanses of the world's oceans proved tempting hunting grounds even for honest seafaring men.[3] This was true especially when the treasure-laden ships of one's rivals – be they Spanish 'papists' or Dutch Calvinists – hove into view. The temptation to attack and pillage vulnerable vessels was almost irresistible, especially if there was a chance at finding a religious or legal pretext.

Going back to medieval times, unsanctioned raids, especially among fellow Christians, were thought to justify reprisal. Reprisal in turn found legal cover in the form of a document issued by a prince or governor for the purpose. 'Corsairing,' later known as 'privateering,' was thus a product of original sin – that first unsanctioned raid. As formal wars increasingly broke out between the Spanish, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and others, corsairing became a type of war by other means, its practitioners civilians preying largely on civilians. Thus were made the careers of men like Francis Drake. They avoided showdowns with official naval forces as they searched for easy booty, the source of dividends for their investors.

Applying the laws of reprisal to civilian raiding in wartime produced a range of perverse effects in places like the Caribbean, including the massacre of innocents and the expansion of the slave trade, but documents suggest that in early modern times most folks expected nothing less. Corsair attacks appear in

3 Benton 2010, 112–120.

merchant contract disclaimers alongside storms, fires, wrecks, and other 'acts of God.'[4] Such were the risks of sea travel. Life was not assumed to be fair. Spanish colonists on Caribbean shores blamed their own sins when corsair sails appeared on the horizon.

The age of Drake, who roamed the Caribbean from the 1560s to the 1590s, is instructive. A letter of marque and reprisal issued by Elizabeth I after 1585, when war against Spain was finally declared, legalized capture of vessels and towns belonging to Spanish subjects worldwide even though many of these subjects were not current on events in Europe. Maritime attacks before 1585 had thus legally constituted simple piracy, but victims could not tell the difference. For Drake, the 'fast-and-light' attacks of the 1570s gave way to quasi-military expeditions in the late 1580s and 1590s that cost a great deal and yielded little booty for shareholders. Wartime corsairing had metastasized beyond its original, sustainable form, although Drake died a national hero off the coast of Panama in 1595.[5]

Whether in the English Channel or in the Florida Channel, the line between simple piracy – by dictionary definition 'larceny at or by descent from the sea' – and privateering could be thin, with only a piece of paper used to justify all manner of violent dispossession. What is clear is that victims of corsairs claimed they had been attacked by pirates, and the redistribution of their possessions followed the same networks as those used by ordinary thieves and contraband traders. Corsair networks were by definition parasitical, laundering loot stolen from individuals using other, legally bound merchant networks. Thus, the Spanish 'state,' such as it was, suffered few direct hits from corsairs or pirates. Spanish subjects bore the brunt, and largely financed their own defense.[6]

Yet for all these private or civilian losses it was Western Europe's imperial rivalries, with their own ebbs and flows, that set the terms within which criminal piracy and contraband trade operated in the early modern Caribbean. Neither piracy nor illicit trade could be perfectly controlled despite incessant decrees and periodic sweeps. Some historians have thrown up their hands and said that everyone was essentially a pirate or contraband trader (or both) at one time or another and that little could be done.[7] In this chapter I suggest that such a relativistic and often static view should not be taken too far.

4 Nadal 2001, 125–136.

5 Kelsey 2000. A less impassioned treatment is Sugden 1992.

6 Hoffman 1980.

7 Leeson 2009.

Despite apparent lawlessness and chaos, Caribbean trade and plunder were governed by rules from the start, and enforcement mechanisms and defenses were not insignificant. It took two centuries of conflict and competition for all this to come together as a coherent system, one capable of suppressing criminal pirate networks. The processes of conquest, settlement, and development of defensible and profitable colonies took time. None of this 'anti-pirate progress' was irreversible, and most of it was accomplished as a result of private initiative, with royal or state institutions following behind.[8]

For most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, then, the Caribbean simply offered too many opportunities for quick gain. Despite monopoly claims stamped with a royal seal and occasionally backed by naval force (many but not all of them Spanish), predatory individuals and companies could not resist stealing accumulated treasure, selling contraband slaves, or trafficking in tropical commodities. The region's many islands and extensive coasts provided not only a constellation of isolated markets for untaxed goods but also sites of shelter, sustenance, and political protection or patronage. Transforming this 'organic' Caribbean of informal or transnational networks that encouraged or at least tolerated predation into a controlled and lawfully delineated space was a great challenge, and one never completely met.

Caribs as Corsairs

Fairly or not, the Spanish called them 'wolves from the sea.'[9] When Columbus reached Haiti or 'Española' in 1492, the native peoples who gave the Caribbean Sea its name were known for two things: piracy and cannibalism. Whether or not the various Carib-speaking peoples of northern South America who migrated among the Windward Islands actually ate human flesh remains a matter of intense debate. That they engaged in long-distance sea raids is, by contrast, a known fact. Few scholars, however, have ventured to call the Caribs pirates, much less to speak of 'Carib pirate networks.'

In his four voyages of reconnaissance (1492–1504), Columbus made dubious distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' native peoples, or 'Indians' as he called them. His allies, the Guatiao or Taínos of the Greater Antilles were 'good,' since they readily permitted trade and settlement, and their various enemies, many of them labeled 'Caribs' were 'bad.'[10] 'Bad' Indian raiders would be punished

8 An example of the dangers of subcontracting pirate hunters can be found in Ritchie 1986.
9 Whitehead 1995.
10 See the classic works: Sauer 1969, and Floyd 1973.

under Castilian law, which came in the form a 1503 decree by Queen Isabella. The die was cast, and within a generation Spanish conquistadors on the mainland would follow a similar pattern of seeking native alliances and then justifying paramilitary sorties and encampments as lawful protection against these new allies' enemies.

Columbus did not equate the Caribs, who soon took to capturing Europeans and Africans along with native neighbors, with the corsairs who roamed the Canary Islands, English Channel, or greater Mediterranean, but others did. By the second quarter of the sixteenth century it appears that Caribs were sometimes even willing to ally with French corsairs going out against the Spanish and their allied subjects. There emerged a new 'colonial' generation of Carib corsairs.[11]

By the later sixteenth century, parts of southern Puerto Rico served as a kind of Carib war front, its Spanish, indigenous and African-descended inhabitants subject to periodic kidnapping raids, often accompanied by broader pillage. More southerly Caribs menaced Margarita and Trinidad into the seventeenth century. For our purposes, however, the Carib theft of persons and valuables does not seem to have led to the creation of sustained trading or ransoming networks, at least not beyond limited spheres. Put another way, Carib 'piracy' seems to have operated mostly within its own cultural matrix, which may have emphasized ritual accumulation, display, and sacrifice rather than commercial redistribution. Surviving records are thin and equivocal.[12]

Spaniards as Corsairs

Christopher Columbus was Genoese, but the Europeans who accompanied him were mostly Spaniards, natives of the Kingdom of Castile. Historians have tended to jump from Columbus to the mainland conquistadors Hernando Cortés and Francisco Pizarro, imagining these men as soldiers for the Spanish king, who also happened to be Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. But in doing this we risk ignoring the private commercial nature of Spanish endeavors in the early sixteenth-century Caribbean, the formation of markets complete with port cities or entrepôts and the formalization of sea raiding for personal profit rather than for the benefit of the king.[13] The question here is: was any of this violent raiding and trading piratical?

11 Lane 2003.

12 Hulme and Whitehead 1992.

13 See Restall 2003; Restall 2018.

Certainly the vast majority of Spanish subjects operating in the early sixteenth-century Caribbean would have taken pains to argue that their actions were legal, if not perfectly moral. That said, there is considerable evidence that Spaniards and some of their native allies kidnapped and pillaged beyond any plausible legal cover, including Isabella's 1503 decree. The Dominican priest Bartolomé de las Casas, who witnessed such acts firsthand, dedicated his life to exposing and punishing what he saw as unconscionable crimes against native peoples of the greater Caribbean and beyond. His widely translated works gave rise to the so-called Black Legend of unbridled Spanish cruelty and greed.[14]

Las Casas, who was quite aware of the activities of foreign corsairs in the Atlantic Islands and soon after in the Caribbean, was careful in his choice of words despite his extraordinary polemics.[15] Since most Spanish raiders in the Caribbean took captives and loot on land rather than at sea, the term 'pirates' was not used. More importantly for Las Casas's legal aims, these were crimes committed by Spanish subjects against other Spanish subjects. Pirates were by definition *foreign* criminals. Yet these same Spanish and allied raiders – the conquistadors and their 'good Indian' allies – descended from the sea, and thus by Mediterranean definitions they could certainly be called 'pirates.'[16] Most of their victims would likely have agreed. The same could be said of some Portuguese slavers in Atlantic Africa.

We risk wading into a semantic mangrove, but the point is that early Spanish raiders in the Caribbean routinely organized *razzias* and pillaging expeditions that exceeded their legal commissions. They formed companies closely resembling those chartered by corsairs, complete with legal agreements to share out profits based on investments of one's person, vessel, weapons, or capital. They then relied upon merchants and landowners willing to buy the goods and bodies of these victims of seaborne raiding.[17] Royal charters were only sought when the prospects of raiding seemed particularly rich, as in Mexico, New Granada, and Peru. The Spanish conquistadors were self-organizing and privately financed.

In the case of the early Spanish Caribbean, a relatively weak colonial state apparatus combined with new opportunities for gain through pillage and kidnapping enabled men like Cortés and Pizarro to work their way from black market slaving expeditions to 'grey market' conquest expeditions, which might

14 de Las Casas 2003 and Clayton 2012. See also Maltby 1971 and Groesen 2012.

15 Adorno 2007.

16 The line between allies and enemies could be very thin indeed, as argued in Feijoo 2003.

17 See, for example, the early raids in Nicaragua described in Sherman 1979, part 1.

then be formalized or submitted to the king's approval after the fact. Like competing criminal networks, the conquistadors – most of them drawing from long Caribbean experience – muscled out competitors and exaggerated their spheres of control and alliances.

Very much like their corsair contemporaries in Western Europe and the Mediterranean, the Caribbean-based conquistadors sought personal enrichment and social ascension by way of pooled enterprises. This was maritime pillage as a private business, and those who provided the raiders with supplies and shelter were also those who trafficked in their stolen goods and people. The king was in on it, too, exchanging *mercedes* and titles for a share of the loot. Only the shrill voice of Las Casas ringing in his ear gave him pause. In sum, what might be called 'conquistador networks' were structurally not so different from later pirate networks.

French and English Corsairs

Not only the Spanish were hungry for American gold. French corsairs awaited Columbus when he returned from the Caribbean on several occasions, and others captured Aztec treasures sent home by Cortés.[18] American silver soon followed, sent from Peru in the early 1530s as part of Atahualpa's treasure but also from the early mines of Spanish Mexico. With the 1545 discovery of Potosí, in present-day Bolivia, silver shipments to Spain from the Caribbean – from Nombre de Dios and Veracruz via Havana – grew exponentially. French corsairs rarely made off with great hauls of silver, but they sacked and ransomed numerous Caribbean towns. The gold of New Granada and the pearls of Venezuela were similarly attractive.[19]

Unlike the Spanish and Carib marauders before them, these new Caribbean interlopers lacked local bases of operation, relying instead on long voyages from western France (Nantes, La Rochelle, St. Malo), with risky stopovers along the way in the Canaries, Cape Verde Islands, and so on. Some French corsairs attempted alliances with the Caribs in the Windward Islands, but lasting agreements or pacts seem to have been rare.[20]

Ultimately, the French tried to establish a corsairing base in northern Florida near modern Jacksonville, but the Spanish rooted it out with great violence in 1565, establishing St. Augustine nearby. The Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559

18 Moreau 2006.

19 The cost of French corsairing is treated in Hoffmann 1980.

20 Moreau 1990.

had already diminished French claims against Spain, and by this time France was descending into the Wars of Religion. Some French corsairs remained active into the early seventeenth century, but they were few and mostly Huguenot. Some allied with the English.[21]

English corsairs first made their way to the Caribbean in the early sixteenth century, in the era of the French raiders like Jacques de Sores, but most appeared after peace with France in 1559.[22] Even so, England under Queen Elizabeth I was not formally at war with Spain until 1585. In between there occurred a shift from illicit slave trading in the late 1560s to outright plunder in the early 1570s, both activities sanctioned by Elizabeth but known to be banned by her Spanish counterpart, Philip II.[23] Confessional differences could serve as pretext. English corsairs such as Francis Drake sought fortune in the distant Spanish Caribbean in part on religious grounds, as Protestant iconoclasts rejecting Spain's papal grant.[24]

As with the earlier French corsairs, the Elizabethans remained tied to their homeland as a base, never quite gaining a permanent foothold in the Caribbean until the early seventeenth century. Roanoke, in Virginia, did not work out, and Bermuda also proved challenging.[25] The lesson of French Fort Caroline in Florida was not forgotten. This lack of local bases forced all sixteenth-century corsairs, including a few Dutch raiders at the very end of the century, to rely on Spanish settlers who were willing to treat with them. Occasionally, these interlopers could rely on native groups, but most were like the Caribs: not interested in Europeans settling down and getting too comfortable.[26]

Any potential corsair allies had reason to be concerned. Most of the Caribbean's native groups, including the namesake Caribs, were wary of Spanish reprisals, but for a time Francis Drake found help from escaped African slaves in eastern Panama.[27] The so-called Bayano maroons, named for their leader, helped Drake and several of his cohort to raid Spanish mule-trains carrying treasure across the isthmus in the early 1570s. In 1577, the Panama maroons aided Drake's companion John Oxenham in the first English raid in the Pacific, but Oxenham was captured and the Bayano maroons were soon after defeated by a large military expedition launched partly from Lima, seat of the viceroy.

21 Boucher 2008.
22 Andrews 1978.
23 Kelsey 2003.
24 Hampden 1972.
25 Jarvis 2010.
26 For Dutch solutions, see Klooster 2016. Games 2018 explores lost English colonies.
27 Pike 2007.

The Spanish could not tolerate a pirate corridor running parallel to its treasure trains.[28]

Meanwhile, English attempts to undermine Spanish sovereignty in the Caribbean by forcing local colonists to buy goods and slaves ultimately backfired, leading to more violence and increased government suppression of contraband exchange. The complex commercial networks required to maintain a pirate economy remained mostly in distant Britain, although in later years of peace the idea of a corsair base in Barbados or even Providence (a small island off Nicaragua), seemed possible.[29] It was only with the arrival of more French, English, and Dutch settlers and merchants in the mid-seventeenth century that one sees a shift to regional bases and the emergence of transnational networks.[30]

Going Dutch

Before this new 'pirate-merchant network' order emerged in the mid-seventeenth century Caribbean, however, it was the Dutch who outshone the English and French as corsairs.[31] The early Dutch interlopers were seeking salt, which they found in great quantities on Venezuela's deserted Araya Peninsula. The Spanish under Philip III responded to growing Dutch interest in Caribbean trade with harsh and expensive naval reprisals, coupled with a policy to depopulate vulnerable settlements and fortify strategic ports and island outposts. Some spurned salt-diggers became corsairs, but their efforts were fairly diffuse before the formation of the Dutch West India Company in 1621.[32]

For the Spanish, peace with the English in 1604 was followed by peace with the Dutch – the Twelve Years Truce of 1609–1621. The lull in hostilities allowed fortification of old outposts such as Margarita Island even as western Hispaniola was largely abandoned. The depopulation policy continued, aided by the fact that most Spanish migrants to the Caribbean quickly moved on to Mexico, Peru, or the highland interiors of Central and South America, still farther from the pirates' reach.[33]

28 Ward 1993.
29 Kupperman 1993.
30 Pestana 2017.
31 Lunsford 2006. For the larger project, see Klooster 2016.
32 Goslinga 1971.
33 Andrews 1978.

With the end of the truce came the rise of the well-armed WIC. Mimicking the VOC in Asian seas, the WIC took corsairing in the Caribbean to new heights. They also made the first real effort to establish permanent local bases and build lasting networks. Spain's strategic choices in the Caribbean and elsewhere in the Americas proved consequential when a new wave of corsairing and settlement in the 1620s found great swaths of formerly settled territory exposed. Even large naval convoys proved vulnerable. In 1628, Piet Heyn and a considerable fleet of Dutch West India Company ships captured the New Spain Silver Fleet soon after it left Havana.[34] Heyn's haul at Matanzas Bay was the single largest gain by corsairs or pirates before the eighteenth century. The massive take helped the WIC finance the capture of northeast Brazil (then technically under Spanish dominion).[35]

The Spanish had some success halting the Dutch advance in the eastern Caribbean but in 1634 the WIC established a permanent base at Curaçao, just off the coast of western Venezuela.[36] Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Curaçao served as a key node in pirate-contraband trade networks, linking merchant families to slavers, gem traders, and practically anyone interested in precious metals.

The English, meanwhile, faltered on Tortuga, Providence, and finally Santo Domingo, but in 1655 they captured Jamaica, turning Port Royal into their version of Willemstadt, Curaçao: a contraband trade entrepôt that welcomed a new breed of corsairs and unsponsored pirates called buccaneers. The recent work of Carla Pestana emphasizes the formal and imperial aims of Cromwell's Jamaica, but Port Royal did serve as a polyglot clearinghouse for plunder.[37] The Spanish were not wrong to see this fragile spit of land as a pirate base no matter what its inhabitants thought of themselves. Again it may be worth comparing the early Spanish Caribbean, which witnessed many 'imperial' subjects engaged in violent raids on peoples with whom they were supposed to be at peace. Though scolded by friars and even the Spanish monarchs, these raiders were encouraged to flout imperial directives by the vastness of the space coupled with their own desperate wants, yet always tethered to a string of newly developed commercial bases. Such men never had trouble selling their illegal

34 For the costs of defense in the aftermath, see Phillips 1986.

35 van Groesen 2015. See also van Groesen 2016.

36 Klooster 2016; Rupert 2012. On the broader Dutch Atlantic trade networks, see Klooster 1998.

37 See Pestana 2017 and Pestana 2014, plus Zahedieh 2002. Older works include Marx 1967 and Pawson and Buisseret 1975. On the failed Santo Domingo raid that preceded English conquest of Jamaica, see Wright 1926.

slaves, and not a few won quasi-military titles, governorships, and other formalities afterwards. Earlier English settlements on South America's Wild Coast and on Barbados were also significant, but more for the trade in tobacco and the later shift to sugar than for raiding.

Jamaica and Curaçao were deep in the heart of the Spanish Caribbean. The French were not dormant, of course, setting up shop on Tortuga and western Hispaniola, nudged to expand by English and Dutch successes.[38] France's eastern Caribbean outposts in Martinique and Guadeloupe added to the growing international network of trading bases, each with its potentially corrupt governor.[39] With these major bases in place by the mid-1650s, a new era of piracy was in the works. Depending on the season, French, English, Dutch, and other buccaneers could harass Spanish tobacco shippers at Maracaibo, sell contraband slaves in Venezuela, and cut logwood in Honduras, often ending up in Port Royal or Petit Goâve to spend both legal and ill-gotten gains.[40] The novel drink known as rum, which appeared around 1640, helped fuel the merriment and mayhem.[41]

Buccaneer Networking

After the Caribs, who used a series of island bases, as did the Spanish raiders who came after them, we may think of pirate networks coalescing in a way recognizable to modern eyes only after about 1650, when the so-called buccaneers or *boucaniers* emerged on the scene. Who were the buccaneers? Thanks to Alexander Exquemelin, Pere Labat, and a string of writers like Raveneau de Lussan, Basil Ringrose, and William Dampier who crossed over to the Pacific around 1680, we know quite a bit about them.[42] Spanish archives are filled with accounts of buccaneer attacks all over the Caribbean.

From what we can tell, many buccaneers engaged in piracy part time, mixing sea raiding with logwood cutting, ordinary merchant shipping, hunting, and other activities.[43] Like earlier corsairs, some buccaneers sold slaves illegally to Spanish subjects along with a range of commodities and manufactures.

38 Galvin 1999.
39 Pérotin-Dumon 2000.
40 Cromwell 2009.
41 Smith 2005.
42 Exquemelin 1969 and in French, Exquemelin 2005. See also Dampier 1699; Labat 1931; Wilbur 1930; Latimer 2009; Haring 1910.
43 Cromwell 2009.

Today's friend might be tomorrow's enemy. Whereas the Dutch made peace with the Spanish in 1648, war with France persisted to 1659, and war with England also flared under Cromwell. Emergent nations made extravagant claims to Caribbean lands and sea-lanes, yet private initiative was still king. As in the era of the great Dutch corsairs, European conflicts served as pretexts for continued raiding on all sorts of civilian targets, mostly Spanish subjects without the means to defend themselves. Such is the chronicle told by Exquemelin.

Habits of raiding and trading proved hard to break when wartime ended, and thus men like Henry Morgan, apparently a former soldier from Cromwell's Western Design, took buccaneer raids to new heights of organization and scale. In the mix were Dutch, Portuguese, Irish, and even Danish buccaneers and renegades, some Protestants, others Catholic. There were likely Jews as well among the buccaneers, as small communities had formed in Jamaica, Curaçao, and Suriname.[44] Although it never developed the kind of hostage taking and ransoming networks typical of the early modern Mediterranean, the Caribbean came to function like a multi-national sea basin after 1650. This newly maturing archipelago at the outer limits of empire allowed clever men and women who spoke several languages to work within its many interstices to their own advantage.[45] Royal officials were just as opportunistic, helping to keep alive a string of 'pirate nests.'

As European states stabilized and exerted greater authority abroad, the interstices of empire narrowed and in some places pinched off altogether. New attempts to police the pirates began soon after Henry Morgan's great 1670–1671 raid on Panama, and with each passing year the tolerance for buccaneers diminished.[46] Their trajectory bears comparison with the Spanish conquistadors. By 1680 most full-time buccaneers took to Pacific waters to try their luck, only to give up for the most part within a decade. William Dampier was among the South Sea adventurers who kept circling back to the Caribbean.[47]

Other buccaneers developed a great loop or 'pirate round' linking the Caribbean and Eastern Seaboard of North America to Madagascar and the Arabian Seas.[48] Taking Mughal pilgrim ships turned out to be an unsustainable

44 Some scholars have argued for the formation of a 'revolutionary Atlantic' about this time. See Linebaugh and Rediker 2000.

45 For some interesting buccaneer cross-overs from the Spanish side, see McCarl 2011 and Lázaro 2011.

46 The classic account using Spanish and English sources is Earle 1981. See also Petrovich 2001.

47 See Dampier 1697; Preston and Preston 2004.

48 Kempe 2016; McDonald 2015.

business as it drew the ire of the English East India Company and Whig investors in Parliament. Caribbean veteran and former buccaneer William Kidd was one of the first victims of the new 'war on pirates.'[49] In 1700, Kidd discovered that the old 'pirate networks' that shielded such activities had suddenly been shut down. Corrupt governors were being called to task.

The Freebooters' Net Collapses

The distinction may be artificial, but historians sometimes apply the term 'freebooters' (from the Dutch *vrijbuiter*, French *flibustier*) to the pirates who ran amok in the greater Caribbean and Atlantic in the decade or so following the 1702–1713 War of the Spanish Succession. These last pirates of the so-called Golden Age still put in at Port Royal, Jamaica, and Nassau, Bahamas, but with the rise of the English Navy after the Treaty of Utrecht, their days were numbered.[50] Pirate havens, the nodes of old contraband networks, disappeared one by one. Former privateers like Woodes Rogers were sent to hunt the pirates down and cleanse their temples.[51]

The freebooters of the 1710s and 1720s were not all Anglo-Americans, but these are the ones we know most about. The famous ones like Blackbeard, Stede Bonnet, Ann Bonney, and Mary Read were featured by Capt. Charles Johnson's group biography more or less in their own lifetimes.[52] Whereas some pirates were summarily killed amid the 'pirate wars,' most who were English subjects got at least a drumhead trial before execution, usually by hanging just offshore to demonstrate their crime against the Admiralty. The sea that lapped their lifeless feet was no longer a lawless space thanks to the courts and the English Royal Navy.

As if part of some larger 'civilizing process' taking place in early Georgian England, the last freebooters were exterminated amid a general crackdown on all varieties of crime and deviance, and by extension on the criminal networks that supported them. London's incorrigibles were crowded into Newgate Prison, then strung up on 'Albion's fatal tree,' some for petty property crimes such as vandalism or poaching.[53] The 'war on pirates' was matched by a Whiggish war on sodomy and prostitution.[54]

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49 Ritchie 1986.
50 Earle 2003.
51 Cordingly 2011; Woodard 2007.
52 Johnson [or Defoe] 1999. See also Frohock 2012.
53 Hay, et al 2011; Thompson 1975.
54 Turley 1999 and for an earlier time, Burg 1984.

In the Caribbean, no such 'general cleansing' took place, in part because 'transportation' to the colonies remained one of the punishments for England's petty criminals, but persecuting pirates did catch fire among certain officers of the king. Several governors of Jamaica made a name for themselves as pirate snuffers. The same was true in Virginia and Massachusetts. In peacetime, alleged pirates made good targets for those seeking promotion, and thus it appears that a significant number of unlucky sailors met a bad end under cloudy circumstances.

As one might expect, a very public war on pirate 'terror' had to produce 'terrorists,' who then had to be publicly humiliated and destroyed to set the proper example. Thus the sermons and confessions surrounding piracy's last gasp in the Caribbean are often shot through with almost Puritan fervor, matched by desperate sadness.[55] A few alleged pirates shot back, calling their captors hypocrites and swearing to the bitter end, but these were few. It might be said that in an age when pirates were finally outlawed, only outlaws could be pirates. Pushed by Parliament, the king declared remaining 'pirate nests' such as Charleston, South Carolina, and Newport, Rhode Island, on notice. Pirate networks had to be fully rooted out.

In broad terms, the early eighteenth-century war against the pirates was a logical outgrowth of capitalist development in the Caribbean. Stealing from the Indians had enabled the Spanish to accumulate capital and labor and thus to develop a diverse regional economy that won foreign exchange by exporting tropical crops and hides, supplemented by precious metals. Foreign corsairs in turn poached on Spanish gains and sought to insert themselves as purveyors of slaves and manufactured goods as they, too, searched for bases to fortify and expand. Once these mercantile bases grew rich enough to launch Spanish-style plantations, as happened in the later seventeenth century on Barbados and Jamaica, homegrown pirates could no longer be tolerated, at least not in peacetime.[56]

Yet the gray area of privateering did not disappear after 1725 or 1730, it simply became more formalized. Piracy after 'the war' to eradicate it had become something traitorous or worse: vile and animalistic. Privateers thus had to adhere to strict rules in order to avoid confusion. Only during wartime was it acceptable to invoke the ghost of Henry Morgan, that old rum-soaked buccaneer turned imperial tool. English privateer attacks during the War of Jenkins's Ear, such as the 1741 siege of Cartagena led by Vernon were promoted as

55 Baer 2007; Jameson 1923.

56 This view was articulated with a mix of rage and humor in Dunn 1972.

neo-classical enterprises, glorious deeds deserving of eternal fame. For those more interested in money than medals, prize courts remained quite busy in the eighteenth century as naval conflicts recurred almost every other decade.[57]

Conclusion

This brief survey of early modern piracy in the Caribbean has attempted to show how non-state actors managed to develop a sequence of overlapping parasitic networks that expanded and contracted in relation to the health of their hosts and the weakness or strength of repressive mechanisms, legal and military (or, more often, paramilitary). Without settled agriculturalists whose surpluses could be exploited, neither the Caribs nor the early conquistadors could have sustained their raiding economies. Once the Spanish developed their own self-reliant societies that produced a bonanza in precious metals and other saleable commodities, the Caribbean became an attractive space for raiding by French, English, and Dutch corsairs, usually sailing under political cover and only slowly developing local bases before 1650.

It is only between about 1650 and 1720 that one can speak of a fully formed 'pirate network,' or scattering of 'pirate nests,' as historian Mark Hanna has called them. These Caribbean bases gave buccaneers and freebooters of many nationalities and confessional persuasions a range of options when it came to disposing of stolen wares or spending hard-won pieces of eight. The gaming tables of Port Royal, Willemstad, and Petit Goâve helped transfer stolen capital into the hands of merchants who in turn helped finance the rising sugar plantation complex that ultimately made uncontrolled piracy an undesirable side effect of imperial expansion.

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